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ABSTRACT

This book is a final report of the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature, which was established in 1987 with 3 years of funding to conduct research that would lead to improvements in the learning and teaching of literature, particularly in the middle grades. The report focuses on critical findings in each of the Center's major research strands. It begins with an introduction to continuing issues in the teaching of literature and then presents bodies of work to help better understand the status of instruction in American schools. The report then points to productive pathways to reform literature education to make it a more thoughtful and critically reasoned experience for all students and their teachers. Following an executive summary, the report is in eight chapters: (1) Introduction: Overview of Findings and Continuing Issues in the Learning and Teaching of Literature (Judith A. Langer and Arthur N. Applebee); (2) Literature Instruction in American Schools (Arthur N. Applebee); (3) The Selections Students Read for Literature Class (Arthur N. Applebee); (4) Elementary School Literature Instruction (Sean Walmsley); (5) Assessing Learning in Literature (Alan C. Purves); (6) Rethinking Literature Instruction (Judith A. Langer); (7) Teacher Research (C.H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon); and (8) Institutional Activities (Genevieve Bronk). Three appendixes contain lists of advisory board members, the Center staff from 1987-1990, and Center publications. (SR)

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Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature

Final Report

Grant No. G008720278
1991

Center for the Learning & Teaching of Literature

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Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature

Final Report

Grant No. G008720278
1991

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Final Report

Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature

University at Albany

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The Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature was established in 1987 with three years of funding from the Office of Research of the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, and from the National Endowment for the Arts. Its mission was to conduct research that would lead to improvements in the learning and teaching of literature, particularly in the middle and high school grades.

Rather than discussing individual studies (each of which has been reported separately in the Center report series), this final report focuses on critical findings in each of the Center's major research strands. The report begins with an introduction to continuing issues in the teaching of literature and then presents bodies of work to help us better understand the status of instruction in American schools. The report then points to productive pathways to reform literature education, making it a more thoughtful and critically reasoned experience for all students and their teachers.

Introduction: Overview of Findings and Continuing Issues in the Teaching of Literature

In its series of large-scale status studies, the Literature Center found that, in general, the teaching of literature in American schools is languishing: instruction tends to deal with a traditional corpus of texts in a text-centered way; assessment focuses on literal comprehension rather than on thoughtful understandings; and newer ways of thinking about human learning and development have not penetrated the literature classroom.

In response to these problems, the Center identified three broad sets of issues that must be

addressed in any attempt to improve the learning and teaching of literature: issues related to the nature of literary understanding (and its contribution to learning); issues of student heterogeneity (including what to teach to diverse groups); and issues of schooling (including relationships among student thinking, student learning, curriculum, assessment, and instruction). These three issues are at the heart of reform in literature education and arise out of the variety of projects and studies sponsored by the Center.

Literature Instruction in American Secondary Schools

To provide accurate information about the state of literature instruction in American schools, the Center undertook several large-scale surveys of existing practice-- the first such studies in more than 25 years. The studies included case studies of schools with reputations for excellence in English, a survey of representative samples of 650 public, Catholic, independent, and award-winning schools, and analyses of the instructional materials included in the most popular literature anthologies designed for use in high school courses.

In general, the award-winning schools are disproportionately suburban, have more resources available to support the program in literature, hire teachers with more experience and better preparation, keep teaching loads lighter, and offer more literature-related special programs and extracurricular activities. In all samples, however, teachers of English tend to be experienced and well-prepared, and teaching conditions show some improvement compared with studies of English instruction during the 1960s.

The teaching of literature is a relatively traditional enterprise. As shown in the surveys, classroom visits, and analyses of anthologies, literature instruction is typically organized around whole-group discussion of a text everyone has read, with the teacher in the front of the class guiding the students toward a common, agreed-upon interpretation. Teachers recognize a variety of text- and student-centered goals, and rely on activities and techniques that reflect these two

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broad sets of goals. Rather than strongly divergent alternative approaches, emphases on students or on texts tend to be treated as legitimate and complementary emphases to be drawn upon at different times for different purposes. Recent developments in literary theory have little influence on most classrooms, which still tend to be dominated by now- outmoded New Critical techniques of analysis of texts. The students' developing responses and interpretations receive little attention; alternative interpretations and arguments about them are not encouraged: Instead, primary emphasis is usually on leading students to understand interpretations presented by the teacher or textbook.

Four aspects of instruction in literature are particularly problematic: 1) Instruction and assessment in literature overwhelmingly emphasize knowledge about texts, authors, and terminology, rather than emphasizing students' abilities to develop and defend their own interpretations of literary selections. 2) Instruction and assessment in literature continue to be based on theories of criticism and theories of learning that are no longer current in their respective fields; there is a need for a clearly articulated theory of effective teaching and learning of literature to guide both day-to-day practice and longer-range curriculum planning. 3) Instruction is tailored to the needs of the college-bound student; other students tend to be given a more skills-oriented, and less interesting, program of study. As presently carried out in the schools studied, instruction in literature is least effective for those students who need it the most. 4) There is a need to provide supportive institutional environments for all literature education. The most effective literature programs existed within such supportive contexts. This includes not only reasonable teaching loads and materials for instruction, but also institutional structures at the school and district level that support teachers in their professionalism rather than constraining their power to make educationally sound decisions about instruction.

The Selections Students Read for Literature Class

In recent years there has been an ongoing, very public debate about the materials for

literature instruction-- the works students read. Some have argued that the canon has eroded, with great works removed from reading lists to be replaced with titles of interest to special groups. Others have argued that the canon has remained too stagnant, providing little room for works representing diverse cultural groups, women, contemporary authors, or adolescent literature. However, these arguments have been based on individuals' experiences rather than on systematic and large-scale study of what is and is not being taught.

To provide a better base of information, the Literature Center conducted a series of analyses of the authors and titles students were asked to read in public, Catholic, and independent schools. In the first study, 488 English department chairs reported on the book-length works that were required reading for any of their classes, grades 7 through 12. To compare these department-level reports with the day-to-day decisions of teachers, a second study involving 650 schools asked teachers to report on all of the literature selections they had asked students in a specified class to read during the previous 5 school days. Finally, because teachers' reports indicated that high school literature anthologies are a major source of the selections they teach, in a third study we examined the specific authors and titles included in the seven most popular series of anthologies, grades 7 to 12.

Results from the study of book-length works indicated that many different individual titles and authors are included in the curriculum, but the traditions from which they are drawn were relatively narrow. Some 81 percent of the selections identified in this study were by male authors, 98 percent by white (non-Hispanic) authors, and 99 percent were written within a United States, United Kingdom, or Western European tradition. Compared with results from 25 years previously, there were only marginal increases in the percent of selections written by women (from 17 percent in 1963 to 19 percent in 1988) or by writers from alternative cultural traditions (from .6 percent to 2 percent). At the same time, the most frequently cited titles in 1988 tended to be required in a higher percentage of schools than in 1963, suggesting there may be somewhat less variety from school to school than appeared in the previous study.

Results from the national survey of teachers' day-to-day selections similarly suggest that the traditions from which selections are drawn are quite narrow. Across genres, only 16 percent of the works taught were written by women, and 7 percent by nonwhite authors. Most of the difference between this survey and that of book-length works resulted from the fact that poetry and non-fiction selections (which were not included in the first study) showed a greater variety than did novels and plays.

The Centers' analyses of anthologies also suggest some narrowing of the curriculum over time; there was more overlap in titles between series than in the last major study, which had examined anthologies in use approximately 30 years previously, and there were fewer titles that appeared in only a single anthology. There was also a reduction in the proportion of relatively contemporary selections, and of "miscellaneous" selections included for their topical interest rather than their literary value. Recent anthologies include a broader representation of works by women and by nonwhite authors, however, than did earlier anthologies. In this respect, anthology contents are somewhat broader in their representation than the teachers' reports of what they actually taught.

Taken together, these studies indicate that the curriculum has narrowed somewhat around works of acknowledged quality over the past 30 years, even as there has been some broadening of the traditions from which these works are chosen to include more selections by women and by non-white authors. The curriculum remains overwhelmingly dominated by white, male authors who wrote in the United States or the United Kingdom, however.

Elementary School Literature Instruction

Because secondary literature education can best be understood in the context of what precedes it, the Center carried out two sets of studies related to the elementary school experiences that students bring with them to their secondary school literature classrooms. One set sought to describe, from elementary teachers' perspectives, the role of literature in their language arts program, and the major instructional practices teachers use to develop children's literary growth.

The second set involved case studies of the actual literary experiences of individual elementary school students.

The studies of elementary school instruction found that most of the teachers studied lacked an instructional philosophy to guide the teaching of literature; they also lacked well-developed practical approaches to integrating literature within the elementary curriculum. In contrast to their detailed record-keeping and monitoring of reading skills instruction, teachers seemed to have little knowledge of what students were reading on their own, or what their colleagues were assigning students to read. Teachers did differentiate between better and poorer readers in their approaches to literature: In general, poorer readers encountered less literature in their elementary program, and were expected to concentrate more on literal understanding of what they read.

The case studies of individual readers' experiences with literature, on the other hand, indicated that when readers were put in a "literature rich" environment, the differences between better and poorer readers became less pronounced. When children were treated as individual readers, not as good or average or poor readers, they seemed to stand a better chance of being given equal access to literature, and to develop more positive images of themselves as readers.

Assessing Achievement in Literature

No in-depth survey of the current status of literature instruction is complete without a thorough understanding of the kinds of knowledge that are valued within the educational system. Thus, the Center undertook a comprehensive study of assessment in literature. This strand of work began with an analysis of the use of literature in commercially published tests for middle and high school grades, including college entrance exams, achievement batteries, literature anthologies, and basal reading series. These analyses indicated that, by and large, literature tests look like traditional reading comprehension tests, with brief passages to be read and multiple-choice questions to be answered. The knowledge that is most often tested is low-level comprehension, with little recognition either of higher-level skills of analysis and interpretation, or of the uniquely literary

nature of the passages.

Later studies by the Center were concerned with developing a more comprehensive understanding of the domain of literature knowledge. The model that was proposed from these analyses is one that emphases three interpenetrating yet still separate dimensions: knowledge, practice, and preferred habits. To validate this model and to explore alternative ways to assess its various dimensions, the Center developed and tested a series of alternative measures of literature knowledge. These prototypes, which have been validated in samples of over 1000 students drawn from three states, can be used as starting points by anyone who wishes to provide a comprehensive assessment of student outcomes from a program in literature.

Rethinking Literature Instruction

The Center's efforts to rethink underlying approaches to literature instruction had two components. One set of Center-sponsored studies examined the nature of literary understanding and the ways it develops during reading and discussion of individual texts. These studies contrasted reading of literary selections with other types of texts, in order to highlight the differences between literary and other types of reading. The studies yielded rich descriptions of the nature of literary thought, and of the reading strategies that readers use to make sense of literary texts.

In the second set of studies, teachers in a variety of settings were asked to collaborate with Center researchers to explore more effective ways in which literature instruction could be designed to support students' development as thoughtful readers of literature. These studies supported the delineation of six essential characteristics of instruction that led to students' development as effective and involved readers of literature, able to make and defend interpretations of their own. These characteristics applied across a wide range of grade levels and contexts (inner city and suburban, upper track and low achieving): 1) Students were treated as thinkers, allowing them to take ownership for the understandings they were developing. 2) Responding to literature was

treated as involving the raising of questions rather than of reaching conclusions. 3) Teachers' questions tapped students' knowledge, rather than the teachers' expected response. 4) Class meetings were treated as times to develop understandings, rather than as times to check comprehension or test that 'correct' conclusions had been reached. 5) Instruction was used to scaffold the process of understanding, helping students find appropriate ways to think about and discuss what they had read. 6) To help students become independent thinkers and learners, the teachers encouraged them to take on roles the teacher had previously assumed. Thus questioning strategies used by the teacher in whole-class discussion were later used by students in small groups, and eventually by individuals to clarify their own readings.

Together, these two lines of research-- one delineating the processes involved in literary understanding and the other focusing on the underlying characteristics of effective literature instruction-- provide a theoretical foundation for needed reforms in literature instruction.

Teacher Research

Another set of projects involved a series of collaborations in which teachers were encouraged to reflect upon and articulate issues in literature instruction by systematic study of other teachers' classrooms. Focusing on the processes of discussion, each teacher in this project videotaped a complete unit of literature study in the classroom of an expert teacher. Working from these videotapes and from interviews with the teacher and selected students, the teachers developed individual narratives of classroom life. These narratives were both part of a process in which the teachers developed a new self-awareness and critical judgment about professional issues, and a way of providing shared contexts for reflection about issues in literature instruction from the teachers' perspective.

Institutional Activities

The work of the Center has been reported in a series of 45 reports (available through the

ERIC system), as well as in a wide variety of related articles, books, workshops, and conference papers. In its first three years, the Center has also organized 2 teacher conferences, focusing exclusively on new directions for literature instruction; a conference with the major publishers of literature textbooks; and a conference with directors of large-scale assessment programs. All of these conferences were focused on ways in which the Center's findings could be used to promote new directions in instruction and assessment, so that literature education can more directly support students' engagement in the thoughtful, critical, and creative understanding that is integral to the process of understanding and interpreting literature.

Final Report

Chapter 1

Introduction: Overview of Findings and Continuing Issues in the Learning and Teaching of Literature

Judith A. Langer
Arthur N. Applebee

The three years since the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature was established (in October 1987, with activities getting fully underway in January 1988) have been years of burgeoning interest in issues in the teaching of literature. After a long quiescence, the renewed interest is evident in a number of forums: research journals such as Research in the Teaching of English and Reading Research Quarterly are publishing a larger number of articles about the learning and teaching of literature; teaching journals such as English Journal, Language Arts, and The Reading Teacher are publishing new teaching approaches; National Writing Project institutes have begun to turn their attention to literature instruction; the American Educational Research Association has established a Special Interest Group on Literature; the Association of American Publishers and the National Testing Network on Writing (NTNW) have sponsored national conferences on the teaching of literature; the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has restructured its reading assessment to reflect the special nature of literary understanding; and there has been a nationwide burgeoning of interest in literature-based elementary school reading programs. Some of these changes reflect a conjunction of more general shifts with the specific interests of the Literature Center; others (such as the changes in NAEP, the publishers' and NTNW conferences, and the establishment of the Literature SIG at AERA) are the direct result of Literature Center activities. All, however, reflect an awareness that improvements in the teaching and learning of literature can play an important role in addressing a variety of central problems in American education today.

In its first three years of work, the Center found that the teaching of literature in American schools was languishing: instruction dealt with a traditional corpus of texts in a text- centered way;

assessment focused trivially on literal comprehension; and newer ways of thinking about human learning and development had not penetrated the literature classroom. These problems require new ways of conceptualizing literature and its teaching.

The following section presents an overview of the conceptualizations and findings that form the nucleus of the Center's major contributions to the field. The individual major bodies of Center research will be presented in chapters 2-7.

Issues Related to the Nature of Literary Understanding: Why Study Literature?

The Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature was founded in the midst of a series of debates that emphasized, on the one hand, the role of literature in promoting "cultural literacy" (Hirsch, 1987) and on the other, the need to broaden the traditional canon of texts to include selections by women and by minority authors. These debates about the school curriculum were layered onto some 20 years of intellectual ferment in the university, ferment that has led to a resurgence of interest in critical theory, and a succession of alternative "schools" of thought, including, among others, structuralism, post-structuralism, deconstruction, Marxist criticism, feminist criticism, and a variety of versions of reader response criticism.

However cast, all of these debates have at their heart the issue of what will count as "knowing" literature, and in turn, what the role of literature should be in schooling and in life. Should it be seen primarily as a body of content to be learned? as a set of skills to be mastered? as a context for examining conflicting theories and critical approaches? as a vehicle for bringing students into a community of shared values and tastes? as an opportunity for examining the ambiguities of language and convention? as a context for exploring the reader's life? The alternatives are many, and their implications for what students will learn to know are not always clear.

It is quite clear, however, that the role of literature in American schools has been limited. During its first three years of activity, the Literature Center sponsored a variety of projects

examining current practice in curriculum, instruction, and assessment (Applebee, 1989a, 1989b, 1990, 1991; Brody, DeMilo, & Purves, 1989; Walmsley & Walp, 1989). Applebee's studies of excellent schools as well as of representative programs across the nation found that literature was generally taught as if there is particular information to be mined from the text rather than as a context for entering a text world, and making sense of it. Similarly at the elementary level, Walmsley and Walp (1989) found that literature was either an add-on outside of the regular instructional program, or was "basalized," becoming an object of decoding and comprehension exercises that treated literature just like any other kind of text. Brody, DeMilo, and Purves' (1989) studies of assessment instruments indicated that almost all assessment instruments, informal and formal alike, treated literature as "reading comprehension exercises"-- seeking a predetermined right answer. Such tests rarely tapped student abilities to build and defend their own interpretations. The findings from all of these studies seem to result from a long-lived underconceptualization of the role of literary understanding in students' developing abilities to think and reason.

The need to reexamine the role of literature in the educational experience of all children is particularly acute at a time when the nation as a whole is redefining its educational goals and objectives. The various reform movements that have affected the schools during the 1980s have had many dimensions, but one central theme has been the need to develop the complex skills that underlie reasoned and disciplined thinking. These are the "higher order" thinking skills, the "skilled intelligence," demanded by the authors of A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), and the "competency in challenging subject matter," "the ability to reason, solve problems, apply knowledge, and write and communicate effectively" of the National Goals for Education adopted by the National Governors' Association (1990).

In this context, there is evidence from a number of sources that the process of understanding literature is a natural and necessary part of the well-developed intellect. For example, Suzanne Langer (1967), Louise Rosenblatt (1978), and James Britton (1970) each describe on the one hand a situation where the language-user engages in a lived-through experience of literature, and on the

other hand a situation where the language-user holds meaning apart, in quest of a more rational or logical understanding. Similarly, Bruner (1986) argues that full understanding is better achieved by using both the ordered thought of the scientist and the humanely inquisitive thought of the storyteller.

A few studies have also provided evidence that the processes involved in understanding literature are productive in dealing with the problems of everyday life. For example, Elstein, Shulman, and Sprafka (1978) have shown that physicians who take a "logical" approach to diagnosis turn to "storytelling" to help understand complex problems. Orr (1987 a,b), Putnam (1978), and Dworkin (1983) have arrived at similar findings in studying other real-life problem situations.

Although these concerns about the nature of literary understanding and its contribution to thinking and problem solving in general are provocative, they have not been sufficiently well-developed to drive new conceptualizations of the role of literature in the curriculum, nor of how to teach it. One reason for this state of affairs is that the various definitions of literary understanding have not been brought into harmony with views of literary knowledge nor of the field of literature itself. This failure finds its way into the university where the adherents of a curriculum based on critical theory vie with those of a curriculum based on a canon. In some instances the theory becomes its own form of canonical knowledge. This failure to provide a comprehensive picture of the relationship between the knower and the known, combined with an unclear sense of literary understanding, reflects questions central to schooling: beliefs about the power of literary understanding will guide decisions about what literature to teach, how to teach it, and how success will be assessed.

The approach that the Literature Center has taken to this problem has been direct: Center-sponsored studies have begun to examine the nature of literary understanding as it unfolds in the process of reading and discussing a variety of texts, and have contrasted it with the ways of making sense that evolve around informational text (Langer, 1989; 1990 a,b; 1991; Roberts & Langer, 1991;

Purcell-Gates, 1990). The results from these studies have clarified both the process of understanding, and the unique features of that process that differentiate reading for literary purposes from reading for informational ones.

In describing the process of understanding, Langer (1989) has outlined a series of "stances" that the reader takes toward a text. These stances are recursive rather than linear; they represent a set of strategies that readers can call upon at any time while reading, discussing, or writing about a text. In brief, the four stances highlight the different processes involved in "stepping in" to the world of a text, "moving through" the experience, "stepping back" to reflect on what one knows, and "stepping out" of the experience to objectify the text and comment upon it. Each stance carries with it a special set of concerns, and these in turn can be the basis for asking questions and providing instructional support.

Langer (1989) has also described a fundamental difference in readers' orientations to the entire meaning-making experience based on their purpose for reading (to engage in the literary experience or to gain information), and how this affects their sense of the whole. In reading for information, readers begin by establishing a sense of the whole, and maintain that sense as a point of reference as they make sense of the text. In a literary reading, on the other hand, the sense of the whole represents an horizon of possibilities that changes as the process of meaning- making develops. Rather than reaching a conclusion, the literary reader comes to an understanding of a situation, and of the many possibilities that remain inherent in it. Rather than providing a fixed point of reference, this understanding, and the possibilities within, will continue to develop as long as the reader continues to think about the text.

From this point of view, much literature instruction seems informational in emphasis. it focuses on a fixed point of reference, a body of specific content that young readers must learn instead of on the horizon of possibilities that they must come to explore. In so doing, such instruction also limits the role that literature plays in the development of students' full range of critical and creative thinking skills. In planning how best to develop these skills and to implement

an effective curriculum, a variety of related questions emerge: How does literary understanding change and develop as children grow older? How is it affected by what children read and what they are taught about literature and its reading? How can assessment determine that a deeper understanding has been achieved? Such questions, in a variety of forms, run throughout the projects carried out by the Center.

Issues Related to an Increasingly Heterogeneous Student Body: Who Are We Teaching?

Another major theme in recent movements to reform education has emphasized the need to deal more effectively with the cultural diversity that is an increasingly dominant characteristic of our schools; schools need both to more effectively educate groups of students who have been historically "at risk" for school failure, and to insure that "all students will be knowledgeable about the cultural diversity of this nation and about the world community" (National Governors' Association, 1990).

Historically, literature in the schools has played a central role in discussions of cultural assimilation and cultural differentiation; more recently, such issues have been heightened by the concerns of authors such as E.D. Hirsch (1987) and Alan Bloom (1987), whose writings represent in part a reaction against perceived changes in American schools. Running through past and present discussions of the role of literature has been the acknowledgement of the power of literature both to shape the values of the individual and to redirect the course of society as a whole. This power has led to a long history of attempts to control the influence of literature on the schools through careful selection of "appropriate" selections, and ruthless censorship of nonconforming texts (see Applebee, 1974, p. 22).

The choices of America's early educators were clear: the role of literature was to reduce diversity and promote common values and a common culture. In making this choice, they listened in particular to the voices of the Romantic poets and critics, who saw in literature a stay against the anarchy of the industrial revolution-- a point of view that was captured in the title of Matthew

Arnold's influential book, Culture and Anarchy (1867; see Bell, 1965; Williams, 1958). English literature found a firm place in American high schools in the late 19th century, and it did so against a backdrop of attitudes such as these. Given such attitudes, a predictable canon emerged, one that reflected a particular British and American literary heritage.

The belief in the power of literature to shape values and beliefs continues. Most recently, this same belief in the power of literature to empower readers has led to a different line of argument, one that emphasizes the need to broaden the traditional canon to reflect the diverse cultural traditions that have found their place within the nation. Gaining impetus from the Civil Rights and women's movements in the 1960s, such voices have found their place within the academy itself as a new generation of scholars has legitimated a wider range of critical studies.

Schools and publishers have been responsive to such calls for more broadly representative instructional materials, but just as in the past, such changes in the content of the curriculum are seen by advocates on all sides as involving fundamental questions about the nature of the individual and of society. As the perception has grown that the curriculum is being broadened, so has the virulence of the reaction against those changes. In the most widely cited critique, E.D. Hirsch (1987) proclaimed the disappearance of cultural literacy from American schools. William Bennett (1988), as U.S. Secretary of Education, called for a reassertion of the values of Western culture, arguing the timeliness and importance of the classics.

Where do American schools stand after two decades or more of attempts to provide more fully for the diverse groups of students they serve? Literature Center studies (Applebee, 1989b, 1990; Walmsley & Walp, 1989; Brody, DeMilo, & Purves, 1989) suggest that most English programs work best for college-bound, primarily white, middle class students. As Rose (1989) has also pointed out, students in non college tracks are given little special attention in program development or course planning. Success with non college students, when it occurred, was attributed to the individual "outstanding" teacher, who was "dedicated," "caring," "devoted," or "sympathetic." In a telling difference from descriptions of success with the college bound, such

success was rarely attributed to the quality of the program, to careful planning, or to the systematic efforts of the department as a whole.

A second point was also clear in the series of Literature Center studies: in spite of 20 years of efforts to broaden the curriculum, the selections for study are still dominated by traditional British and American literature. A survey of required texts conducted in the spring of 1988 yielded results that look remarkably like those from secondary schools at the turn of the century. Of the most frequently required book-length works in public schools (grades 9-12), Shakespeare, Steinbeck, and Dickens led the lists. Of the top 10, all but one were the work of white, male, Anglo Saxon authors. Although it was discouraging to see so little diversity in the top ten titles, it was even more discouraging to find a similar homogeneity in the top 30 and top 50, and in the selections from schools where the student body was 50% or more non white (Applebee, 1989b).

There is more diversity in selections of short stories, poems, and nonfiction, and commercial literature anthologies in particular have broadened the basis of their selections (Applebee, 1990, 1991). The curriculum as a whole, then, looks somewhat better than do the book length works. But it is the book length works that the teachers perceive as representing the heart of the curriculum; these are the texts which receive the most time and attention, and around which other selections are often organized and introduced. As long as these central texts remain unchanged, there will be no "canonicity" for minority authors or for women; their place will continue to be at the margins of the culture that is legitimated by its place in the school.

There is another bit of evidence that is relevant to the argument here, evidence about what students know. Student achievement, as reflected in a recent National Assessment of literature and U.S. history, shows a similar pattern (Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1987). The assessment itself was a multiple- choice examination of knowledge of literature. On this examination, what students got right resembles the texts they are required to read. The best known aspects of literature included biblical stories, Shakespeare, Dickens, Greek mythology, and children's classics ("Cinderella," Alice in Wonderland)-- literature that reflects the same Western heritage as the book-length required texts.

But such overall results are misleading in their suggestion that students are somehow "homogeneous" in what they know. The most interesting, if commonsense, finding from the National Assessment is that students' knowledge of literature is clearly linked to the diversity of their backgrounds. In particular, students are more likely to be knowledgeable about the literature and culture of their own racial and ethnic groups. Black students, for example, did less well overall than did their White peers. But they did better than Whites on questions dealing with literature by or about Black people. To take a typical example, 53% of Black students answered a question about Langston Hughes correctly, compared with only 35% of White students and 27% of Hispanics (Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1987).

Such patterns of differential achievement raise interesting and troubling issues: What would patterns of racial and ethnic achievement look like if the content of the tests was dominated by Black, Hispanic, Asian, or Native American literatures? And would such tests be any less representative of knowledge of literature than are the tests used now?

Another way of looking at this issue is to relate it to the first. It may be that students from some racial and ethnic minorities have learned a definition of literary understanding that is different from that of the majority group. Purves (1981), for example, found that students in different national cultures learned particular manifestations of literary understanding appropriate in their settings. Similarly, at the level of higher education in this country, the development of programs in women's literature and in minority literatures brings with it the idea that ways of reading and understanding literature are unique to special groups. For this reason it may be not only the texts and tests which do not match what the students know and understand, but the very criteria for knowing and understanding held by those who construct the tests.

Thus the Center's initial work leads to a variety of continuing questions about what it means to understand literature, and how this manifests itself across differing cultural groups. How should the literary traditions of the diverse groups that make up American society be represented in the curriculum? How can the teaching of literature become a vehicle for empowering students who

have traditionally been at risk for school failure, inviting them back into the curriculum from which they may presently feel excluded?

Issues Related to Schooling: How Should We Reconceptualize the Teaching and Learning of Literature?

Discussions of the role of literature in intellectual development, as well as of issues of heterogeneity, lead inevitably to issues of curriculum and instruction. Given new perceptions of what students can learn to know and do, and a new awareness of the need for effective programs for all groups of students (minority and majority; high achievers and low achievers; rich and poor), how can the teaching of literature be made more effective?

While the English language arts have witnessed extensive reform during the past 20 years, this reform has focused primarily on writing instruction; the teaching and learning of literature has been largely ignored. Thus, the conventional wisdom about effective approaches to teaching the English language arts is badly divided-- discussions about writing instruction emphasize process-oriented approaches that focus on students' thinking, while the teaching of literature remains dominated by text based approaches that focus on "right" answers and predetermined interpretations (Applebee, 1989b, 1991). Until recently, there have been few attempts to reconceptualize literature instruction in light of relevant research on the processes of making meaning in reading and writing, or in light of major movements within literary theory itself.

Process conceptualizations of reading and writing (see Spiro, Bruce, & Brewer, 1980, and Gregg & Steinberg, 1980, for reviews) see text understanding and production as constructive processes that develop over time. Such views move the goal of instruction away from ensuring that students interpret texts in a single "correct" manner toward helping them learn to explore the possibilities of the pieces they read and study and write about.

The work of a number of scholars from a variety of fields and theoretical frameworks has begun to converge on these issues. Duckworth (1987), from a neo-Piagetian framework, argues that all learning is constructivist. It is the individual's own inquiry that is at the root of learning, the

source of understanding, and the development of the mind. We need, she says, to stimulate learners toward genuine inquiry, and we teach best when we learn ways to support students' own ideas and directions. Rogoff (1990), from a neo-Vygotskian perspective, posits that cognitive development is an apprenticeship. It occurs through guided participation in social activity, with participants who support and encourage learners' understandings. Willinsky (1990), from the perspective of school literacy programs, argues for a "new literacy" consisting of programs that actively engage students in reading and writing-- programs that "produce hours of focused discussions, reams of notes and drafts, scores of performances and publications" (7-8). He calls for instructional programs that foster a new level of literate engagement, with less intellectual authority in the environment and greater voice to the students' developing thoughts.

These views are consonant with those of John Dewey (1933) and the student-centered educational theorists of the early 20th century who called for experience-based curricula to insure students' active engagement in learning. Almost a century of interdisciplinary research into the processes of language and learning (see Langer & Allington, in press), however, provides the basis for a reconceptualization of instructional theories in a way that moves well beyond that early work. Several movements in language education (including literature-based reading instruction, whole language approaches, and the integrated language arts) are examples of active attempts to put these notions into practice, and their growing popularity is due in large part to the emphasis on students' central role in the construction of meaning.

Most instruction, however, has a different emphasis. As noted earlier, rather than developing a rich web of meaning in which new knowledge becomes part of an available background for interpretation of new experiences, students are taught content in isolation from processes of comprehension and interpretation. The results of this are evident in national and international assessments of literature achievement. In the 1980 national assessment (Applebee et al., 1981), students demonstrated little ability to formulate extended and well-defended interpretations. In the 1986 assessment (Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1988; Ravitch & Finn, 1988), they demonstrated a

limited degree of recognition of major themes, characters, authors, and works from the Western literary tradition. In the international assessment (Purves, 1981), U.S. students showed a preference for finding themes and morals in texts, with little attention to the style or artistry of literature. It seems, in other words, that current approaches may be leading to the development neither of sufficient background information nor of adequate skills of interpretation and analysis. What students seem to have developed instead is a set of superficial reading skills that allows them to answer multiple-choice comprehension questions about the selections they encounter, together with a vocabulary of technical terms (character, theme, setting) that they can use in limited contexts, but cannot use effectively in developing their own interpretations. In many ways this behavior is a sensible reaction to instructional demands; students have developed a "response to literature scaffold -- an ordered 'ladder' on which to hang the 'key school words' which are appropriate in responding to a predictable 'school-type' question" (Langer, 1982).

Yet, if skills of interpretation and critical analysis are to be taught more effectively, recent research indicates that the study of literature can be a particularly productive way to do so. Literature is an inviting medium, both in content and structure, in which all students can productively develop, analyze, and defend interpretations and aesthetic judgments. However, to do so, notions of "what counts" as knowing will need to change.

The teaching of literature became formalized as a mandated part of the English curriculum in American schools in the late 1800s (see Applebee & Purves, in press, for a review). Since that time, the major debates that have focused on the teaching of literature have centered on the relative contribution of the text and of the reader's own understanding to "good" reading. For example, New Critical approaches involve close and careful textual analyses of different sorts. They focus on the text as the source of knowledge, and are an example of one set of movements within literary criticism, themselves unconcerned with issues of instruction, that have been used to formulate educational goals and approaches to teaching. In this case, the analytic procedure becomes the focus of instruction. Another text-based school approach to literature follows from psychological

and social criticism and urges the teacher to rely upon already agreed upon interpretations of works as the focus of instruction, so that students will learn to read in ways that invoke those interpretations. Instruction focuses on content-- on the received interpretation itself.

In contrast, approaches that focus on the reader (e.g., reader response theory) consider meaning to reside in the reader (Bleich, 1978; Fish, 1971) or in the transaction between reader and text (e.g., Iser, 1974, 1978; Rosenblatt, 1978), with the reader's interpretations as evidence of good reading. Such reader-based approaches have received extensive emphasis in the recent pedagogical literature (Britton, 1970; Dias & Hayhoe, 1988; Probst, 1988; Purves, Rogers, & Soter, 1990), and are the critical views most consonant with current research on reading comprehension as an interactive and constructive process. They are also the literary approaches that have contributed most significantly toward the Literature Center's work on the reconceptualization of the learning and teaching of literature and the instructional theory-building that underlies it.

The Literature Center's work on learning and instruction has been based upon a sociocognitive view of learning (Langer, 1985, 1986, 1987a, 1989, 1990b). This view is heavily influenced by Vygotsky (1962, 1978) and the neo- Vygotskians (e.g., Rogoff, 1990; Scribner & Cole, 1980; Wertsch, 1985) who carry on after him, on Bruner and his students' (Bruner et al., 1956; Bruner, 1986) work on concept development, on work in language acquisition (e.g., Brown, 1973; Weir, 1962), and on work studying issues of language and culture (e.g., Labov, 1972; Gumperz, 1982). It sees learning as being socially based, and cognition (in particular, ways of thinking) as growing out of those socially-based experiences. Within social settings, children learn how different forms of knowledge are used and communicated-- what counts as knowing and what that knowledge "looks like," what values are respected and what habits are to be cultivated. As children learn to manipulate the tools of language to serve the functions and reach the ends they see modeled around them, their ability to think and reason develops in a culturally appropriate way; they use certain cognitive strategies to structure their thoughts, and not others. Ways of thinking appropriate to a particular culture are learned, while others (those that are unproductive for

successful knowing and communicating in that culture) are not practiced and learned. Learners' cognitive uses are selective, based upon the uses to which literacy is put within a community, and the learners' beliefs about "what counts" within that community. Thus, as children learn to interpret and use the linguistic signs and symbols of the culture, they become part of the community (see Langer, 1987a; Purves, 1990).

This view leads to a substantive change in the ways in which literacy learning and issues of schooling are addressed. It forces us to look at ways in which literacy is used, what is valued as knowing, how it is demonstrated and communicated-- and the kinds of thinking as well as content knowledge that result. Because schooling is an important context in which "academically sanctioned" literate thought and literary discourse take place, we need to understand the sociocognitive context of that schooling-- the ways of thinking encouraged in literature classrooms and the goals and values of the discourse community.

Literature Center studies (Applebee, 1989; Langer, 1991; Brody, DeMilo, & Purves, 1989; Walmsley & Walp, 1989) lead to the conclusion that students are not learning to think and reason "critically" because this way of thinking has little place in the activities and the day to day values of most schools. They receive more instruction about literature and its criticism from the mass media than they do from the schools' literature programs, which have cut themselves off from the world of the arts, both the fine arts and the popular arts. As a result many students become disenchanted with literature learning and with school. In order to prepare students to be more thoughtful-- to probe more deeply into what they are learning-- the culture of their schooling must change.

Langer's Literature Center studies have described some of the dimensions that are involved in more effective teaching of literature. In a series of collaborative studies (Langer, 1991; Roberts & Langer, 1991), she found that effective instruction in literature has particular characteristics (see chapter 6) that mark the classroom experience as thoughtful and instructive. By documenting the nature and importance of these characteristics in students' critical and creative reasoning, Langer's studies have provided a framework for guiding reform in the teaching and learning of literature.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the broad, cross-cutting issues that have emerged from the Center's first three years' work. The chapters that follow will focus in more detail on particular bodies of Center work: Literature Instruction in American Schools (Applebee), The Selections Students Read for Literature Class (Applebee), Elementary School Literature Instruction (Walmsley), Assessing Achievement in Literature (Purves), Rethinking Literature Instruction (Langer), Teacher Research (Knoblauch and Brannon), and Institutional Activities (Bronk).

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Chapter 2

Literature Instruction in American Schools

Arthur N. Applebee

Introduction

During the past few years, the teaching of literature has become the focus of increasing attention both within the profession and from the public at large. Part of this attention has come from a concern that traditional cultural values are not receiving sufficient attention (e.g., Hirsch, 1987); part has come from attempts to reinforce the academic curriculum (e.g., Bennett, 1988); and part has come from teachers who have begun to question whether recent changes in writing instruction may have implications for the teaching of literature as well. Though some of these discussions have been intense, they have lacked a solid base of evidence about the characteristics of literature instruction as it is currently carried out in American schools. What goals do teachers propose to guide their teaching of literature? What selections do they use? How are these selections presented? To what extent are curriculum and instruction differentiated for students of differing interests or abilities? What, in fact, are the most pressing issues of theory and practice in the teaching of literature?

To answer questions such as these, the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature carried out a series of studies of the elementary and secondary school curriculum. These included a survey of the book-length works that are required in the secondary school (Applebee, 1989a), an analysis of the role of literary selections in published tests (Brody, DeMilo, & Purves, 1989), case studies of programs in schools with reputations for excellence in English (Applebee, 1989b), analyses of the place of literature in elementary school programs (Walmsley & Walp, 1989), a content analysis of the selections and teaching apparatus included in secondary school literature anthologies (Applebee, 1991), and a survey designed to provide a broad portrait of methods and materials in representative samples of schools nationally (Applebee, 1990). Together, these studies

were designed to provide a rich portrait of current instruction-- the background against which any reform will take place.

Competing Models of the English Language Arts

Since the 1970s, a variety of movements have affected the teaching of the English language arts in general and the teaching of literature in particular. One important set of movements affecting the teaching of English has come from outside the profession. In the 1970s, public concern about students' abilities to perform successfully in the job market led to a widespread emphasis on "basic skills." This in turn led to the institutionalization of a variety of forms of minimum competency testing in the majority of states, and reinforced a "language skills" emphasis in the teaching of the English language arts. The emphasis on basic skills prompted its own reaction during the following decade, in the form of a reassertion of the traditional values of a liberal, academic curriculum. Calls for a return to "excellence," for a more academic curriculum, and for the preservation of "cultural literacy" are all rooted in this liberal (and paradoxically, in this context, conservative) tradition. Like the emphasis on basic skills that preceded it, this emphasis also came largely from outside the professional education community but has led to a widespread reexamination of curriculum and materials in the teaching of the English language arts.

Even as these external calls have been shaping the teaching of English, leaders of the profession have been searching for a new basis for the curriculum. The difficulty of that process was evident in a report from the NCTE Commission on the English Curriculum. Three Language Arts Curriculum Models (Mandell, 1980) did not attempt to reconcile the many competing models within the profession, but instead presented three alternative, comprehensive curriculum models for prekindergarten through college. The three models represent long standing traditions in the English language arts: one was student-centered, emphasizing "personal growth," one was content-centered, emphasizing the preservation of a cultural heritage, and one was skill-centered, emphasizing the development of language competencies.

In contrast to the eclecticism represented by the Curriculum Commission volume, the most fully developed models to be offered for language arts instruction in recent years have been based on constructivist theories of language use and language development. Constructivist approaches have a variety of roots, with related frameworks emerging in fields as seemingly diverse as linguistics, psychology, history of science, sociology, and philosophy (on constructivist theories, see Langer & Applebee, 1986; Applebee, in press). What scholars in this tradition share is a view of knowledge as an active construction built up by the individual acting within a social context that shapes and constrains that knowledge, but that does not determine it in an absolute sense.

Constructivist theory involves an important shift in what counts as knowledge, and by implication what should be taught in schools. From a constructivist perspective, notions of "objectivity" and "factuality" lose their preeminence, being replaced by notions of the central role of the individual learner in the "construction of reality" (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Instruction becomes less a matter of transmittal of an objective and culturally-sanctioned body of knowledge, and more a matter of helping individual learners learn to construct and interpret for themselves. There is a shift in emphasis from content knowledge to processes of understanding that are themselves shaped by and help students to become part of the cultural communities in which they participate. The challenge for educators is how in turn to embed this new emphasis into the curricula they develop and implement.

In the English language arts, constructivist frameworks have been particularly appealing to scholars who have emphasized the skills and strategies that contribute to ongoing processes of language use. During the 1970s and early 1980s, process-oriented approaches dominated writing instruction and affected reading instruction as well, particularly through the whole language movement which sought an integrated approach to all aspects of the language arts. Although process-oriented approaches developed first in the teaching of writing and reading and have been slower to develop in the teaching of literature, teachers and scholars who have been convinced of the value of process- oriented approaches to the teaching of writing have begun to look for ways to

extend these approaches to other areas of the curriculum (Applebee, 1989b; Langer, 1984, 1989, 1991; Purves, 1990) as well.

Responding to the tension between external calls for basic skills and a traditional liberal curriculum, and the emerging focus within the profession on process-oriented approaches, NCTE, the Modern Language Association, and five other organizations concerned with the teaching of English as a first or second language formed an English Coalition to consider common problems and issues. As one part of their activities, they jointly sponsored a three-week conference during which some 60 educators met daily to find common ground for their teaching of the language arts. Their report, The English Coalition Conference: Democracy through Language (Lloyd-Jones & Lunsford, 1989), is firmly within a constructivist tradition. The conference emphasized the role of students as "active learners," and argued, as the introduction to the report explained, that learning "inevitably unites skills and content in a dynamic process of practice and assimilation" (xxiii). Although conference participants found themselves in some agreement about goals and directions for the teaching of the English language arts, they failed to provide clear guidelines for the curriculum. Caught in a reaction against prescriptive "lists"-- whether of texts to read or skills to learn-- the conference found no broader structuring principles to offer. Instead of a unifying framework, the report presents a variety of alternatives and options, each of which is valuable in itself but the total of which do not provide a sense of unity and direction. In this regard, the report abandoned the eclecticism of the earlier volume (Mandell, 1980) without offering a viable alternative.

The Literature Center studies of current practice, then, have taken place against the background of considerable movement within the teaching of the English language arts. Constructivist approaches have made a large contribution to the theory guiding the teaching of writing and reading, but have a less clearly developed relationship to the teaching of literature. Older frameworks stressing basic skills, liberal education, and personal growth continue to assert themselves. Newer frameworks, deriving from constructivist principles, have gained considerable influence but have yet to result in well-articulated guidelines for curriculum and instruction.

The most recent of the Literature Center studies of current practice (Applebee, 1990) was a questionnaire survey of five national samples of schools: representative samples of public, Catholic, and independent secondary schools, and complete samples of two sets of schools that had been singled out for excellence in their English programs (schools that had consistently had winners in the National Council of Teachers of English Achivevement Awards in Writing competition, and schools that had been designated as Centers of Excellence by NCTE). Five staff members in each of the 650 participating schools were asked to complete questionnaires designed to provide information about different aspects of the literature program: the department chair, the school librarian, and 3 "good teachers of literature" chosen to be representative of the literature program across grades and tracks.

In a companion study, we also examined the seven series of literature anthologies (grades 7 through 12) that were reported in most frequent use by the department chairs in our surveys. In addition to analyzing the selections themselves (see chapter 3 of this report), we also examined the instructional apparatus in terms of the types of knowlege about literature that were privileged in the study questions.

The present chapter will provide an overview of secondary school literature instruction as it emerges from these studies, and will look across the whole set of Literature Center studies to outline a series of continuing issues that represent the growing points in current theory and practice in the teaching and learning of literature.

Current Practice in the Teaching of Literature

The Schools and their Teachers

One section of the survey examined the general context in which literature instruction takes place, including such features as teacher preparation, teaching load, and strengths and weaknesses of the English program as a whole. Responses indicated that in general teachers of English are experienced and well-prepared. On average, public school teachers reported over 14 years of

teaching experience, and 95 percent reported an academic concentration in English or a related field. Some 61 percent had a masters degree.

Reports of teaching conditions show some improvement when compared to earlier studies (Squire, 1961; Squire & Applebee, 1968), but even today only 28 percent of public school teachers reported loads that reflect the NCTE-recommended maximum of 100 students per day[1].

The three greatest strengths that teachers noted in the English programs in their schools reflect their professionalism and competence: they valued the freedom to develop their own style and approach, the overall preparation of the faculty, and the support of the department chair. The program in literature and the program for the college bound were also highly rated.

Teaching load led the list of weaknesses cited by the public school teachers; it was considered a weakness by 36 percent of those responding. The degree of community support and programs for nonacademic students came next among the weaknesses the teachers noted.

Reports from award winning schools indicated a number of consistent differences between them and the random sample of public schools. Compared with the random sample, the award-winning schools were disproportionately suburban, had more resources available to support the program in literature, hired teachers with more experience and more graduate preparation for teaching, kept teaching loads lighter, and offered more special programs and extracurricular activities related to the teaching of English. They also tended to be more content with the quality of their students and the level of community support for the program in English.

Teaching conditions in Catholic schools were similar to those in public schools, though overall school size was considerably smaller. Teaching loads in the independent schools were by far the best, with fully 70 percent of the teachers reporting loads of 100 students per day or less.

The Curriculum as a Whole

Another set of questions included in the national survey focused on the organization of the

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[1]Since the time of the survey, NCTE has revised its recomendation to 80 students per day.

English curriculum as a whole, including the relationships between literature and the other components of English instruction. Results from these questions suggest that literature has maintained the central place in the English curriculum that it has had at least since the turn of the century (Applebee, 1974), in spite of recent reforms focusing on the teaching of writing. Approximately 50 percent of class time is devoted to literature in high school English classes; when the interrelated nature of the English language arts is taken into account, as much as 78 percent of time in the typical classroom may be devoted to literature-related activities. The emphasis on literature is highest in the upper grades and college-preparatory tracks, and lower in middle-school and non-college classes.

Teachers report emphasizing a broad range of text- and student-centered goals for their teaching of literature, and do not see these emphases as being in conflict with one another. Their expectations are highest for their college-bound students; for the non-college bound, they place less emphasis on both student-oriented and text-oriented outcomes.

The curriculum as a whole tends to be organized around genres in grades 7 through 10, American literature in grade 11, and British literature in grade 12. These patterns were apparent both in teachers' responses and in the organization of the popular literature anthologies. Recent attempts to add courses in world literature introduce some variation into this pattern, particularly at the 10th and 12th grade levels. Within these broad organizational patterns, the most highly rated approach to organizing the curriculum was the study of individual major works (rated highly by 78 percent), followed closely by study of genres or types (72 percent). The most highly rated approaches to literature study all involve techniques that work well with whole-class study. Guided individual reading received lower ratings than any other approach, though it was somewhat more popular in the junior high/ middle school grades than it was in the high school.

The curriculum in literature was very similar across the various samples studied here, and also seems very stable. The majority of department chairs expected that there would be no changes in content or approaches to the teaching of literature in their departments during the next

few years.

Instructional Approaches

Teachers' approaches to particular texts-- the questions they ask and the responses they expect to receive-- can have a profound influence on what students learn. Responses across a variety of questions in the national survey indicate that the typical high school literature class places heavy emphasis on whole-class discussion of texts that all students have read. These discussions are most likely to focus on the meanings of the text, both in terms of students' experiences and in terms of careful questioning about the content. They are less likely to emphasize line-by-line analysis or extended discussion of literary techniques.

Teachers report a dual emphasis on techniques that are loosely related to reader response theories, and on those that are associated more directly with close analyses of text. Rather than standing in opposition to one another, these broad theoretical orientations to literary study are frequently treated as complementary: in the case studies, concern with reader response seemed most typically used as a way into texts, with a focus on analysis of the text itself emerging as a later but ultimately more central feature of classroom study (Applebee, 1989b).

Analyses of anthology study questions reinforce the impression that literary study remains very text-centered. Study questions typically follow a sequence that begins with an exploration of the literal meaning of the text ("what happened") and moves from there to gradually more analytic and evaluative questions. Questions that invite personal response are relatively rare. Perhaps the best indicator of the emphasis in the study apparatus comes from an analysis of the extent to which questions emphasized recitation (that is, they assumed a right answer): an average of 65 percent of the questions asked assumed that there was one right answer. Such emphases turn literature from a process of interpretation into a game of guessing what the teacher wants.

Teachers' approaches to text are quite consistent across the major genres that are taught, though with some shifts in emphasis in response to the particular characteristics of each genre.

Thus poetry and plays are more likely to be read aloud; novels and plays are more likely to involve the use of study guides; and plays (predominantly Shakespeare) are more likely to include background lectures (presumably to help with the difficulties of Shakespearean language and theatre). Across all genres, however, whole-class discussions focusing on meanings and interpretations remain the primary means of instruction.

Teachers' reports on assessment techniques reflected this emphasis, with evaluation of participation in discussion being rated as the most frequent measure of progress in literature. Formal measures of progress were dominated by quizzes, unit tests, and essays, with the balance shifting toward essays in the upper grades and in college-preparatory classes, and toward quizzes and study guides in the lower grades and in non-college tracks.

In general, there was considerable consistency between the goals teachers cited for the study of literature and the particular techniques that they reported emphasizing in their classrooms. Means of assessment seemed more neutral, with essays, for example, being adaptable to a variety of different emphases depending upon the teachers' goals. Essays, however, were rarely used for non-college bound students-- who seem in general to receive more emphasis on narrowly defined comprehension skills and less on response and interpretation.

Literature and Writing

If writing and literature are often treated as independent components of the teaching of English, teachers' reports suggest that that separation is unrealistic. In the junior high and middle school, some 58 percent of the writing students do is writing about literature-- a figure that rises to 80 percent by the senior high grades. Clearly, these two aspects of the teaching of English are closely intertwined.

It also seems clear that two decades of discussion of process-oriented approaches to the teaching of writing have had some impact. Two-thirds of the department chairs reported that the majority of their teachers were familiar with such approaches. They also reported that changes in

writing instruction had led to more writing about literature, and also to some changes in the ways that literature was taught. These reports are more optimistic than those from classroom observers (Applebee, 1989b), though the observers also found that changes in literature instruction were often being led by teachers who had previously been active supporters of process-oriented approaches to writing.

Reports on the kinds of literature-related writing students do, however, are somewhat less optimistic. When looked at in the context of a variety of classroom activities, essays and comprehension questions both receive heavy emphasis in the teaching of literature. And when teachers are asked to list their most typical writing assignment, rather than to report on the variety of activities in their classrooms, text-based essays dominate by a wide margin over essays that stress a reader's personal response or interpretation. Instruction in college- bound classes places greater emphasis on essay writing, while that in non-college tracks places more emphasis on exercises.

Teachers' reports indicate considerable variety in the techniques that they regularly use when teaching writing, including such techniques as multiple drafts and peer response. The most frequently-used techniques, however, remain very traditional, emphasizing written comments, assignment of a grade, and correction of errors in mechanics. Thus although it is clear that process-oriented instruction is broadly recognized as an appropriate approach to the teaching of writing, it does not seem to have led to drastic reformulation of what teachers do, at least in the context of writing about literature.

The School Library

The school library can provide an important complement to the program in literature, providing resources for classroom instruction as well as for independent reading. Reports on library resources available to support the program in literature suggest that school library collections have been strengthened since Squire and Applebee (1968) examined them in the early 1960s, but that considerable room for improvement remains. Less than half of the English teachers in the present

study rated their school library as an "excellent" resource in the teaching of literature.

Teachers' ratings of the library were related most directly to the size of the library collection and to the availability of specific titles. Ratings were lower for libraries that restricted access to some materials, and higher for those where the library staff met regularly with the English department to coordinate use of materials. Computer and media resources, though part of most library collections, were not related to teachers' ratings of the library's usefulness.

Libraries were used most frequently for research papers and for films or videotapes; surprisingly, they were used much less frequently to encourage wide reading or as part of individualized reading programs, though such uses increased in schools where the teachers rated the library collection more highly. The majority of the teachers supplemented resources available in the school library with a classroom book collection, particularly in the junior high/middle school grades.

When librarians were asked for suggestions for broadening the curriculum to include a better representation of women and minorities, they offered a wide variety of titles and authors. It is perhaps revealing of how much collections need to be broadened, however, that these authors were not necessarily available even in the libraries on which the librarians were reporting.

The Program as a Whole

The teaching of literature as it emerges from the Center's studies of current practice is a relatively traditional enterprise. The typical literature classroom is organized around whole-class discussion of a text everyone has read, with the teacher guiding the students toward a common or agreed-upon interpretation. Teachers recognize a variety of text- and student-centered goals, and rely on activities and techniques that reflect these two broad sets of goals. Rather than strongly divergent alternative approaches, emphases on students or on texts are treated as legitimate and complementary emphases to be drawn upon at different times for different purposes. Student-centered approaches are often used as motivating techniques in the lead-in to more formal,

text- centered study.

Overall there is considerable complacency about the teaching of literature. The majority of department chairs do not expect to see major changes in their programs or approaches in the next few years, and the majority of teachers rate their teaching of literature as a particular strength of their programs in English.

The lack of concern about the program in literature should not be surprising. The profession as a whole has focused its attention over the past 20 years on the teaching of writing, pointing out problems and urging reforms. Throughout that period, the teaching of literature has continued unchanged and unexamined. The only serious challenges to current approaches have come from a reaction against a broadening of the canon of texts (e.g., Hirsch, 1987) (a reaction that Literature Center studies [see chapter 3] suggest may be unwarranted) and more indirectly from changes in writing instruction.

Continuing Issues in the Teaching of Literature

The results from the studies of current practice that have been conducted at the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature suggest a series of issues that need to be addressed in the teaching of literature. These issues reflect the growing edges of theory and practice, and the starting points for any meaningful reform. They offer another way in which to place the results from the Center's studies into a broader perspective.

Issue 1. We need to develop programs that emphasize students' ability to develop and defend their interpretations of literary selections, rather than ones that focus only on knowledge about texts, authors, and terminology.

As noted earlier, the conventional wisdom about the teaching of language has shifted increasingly toward an emphasis on constructivist approaches. Rather than treating the subject of English as a subject matter to be memorized, a constructivist approach treats it as a body of knowledge, skills, and strategies that must be constructed by the learner out of experiences and

interactions within the social context of the classroom. In such a tradition, to know a work of literature is not to have memorized someone else's interpretations, but to have constructed and elaborated upon one's own within the constraints and conventions of the classroom discourse community.

Teachers' goals for the teaching of literature as revealed in the Center's studies seem caught between constructivist and earlier traditions. On the one hand there is considerable concern with text-centered goals that are in part a legacy of New Critical techniques and in part a legacy of skill-oriented instructional approaches. On the other hand there is also considerable emphasis on student-centered goals, and on the critical frameworks offered by reader response criticism. These goals are more in keeping with a constructivist framework for teaching and learning, though as currently implemented they seem more closely related to earlier traditions of concern with students' motivation and "personal growth."

The traditional teacher-centered classroom that is reflected in the results of the Center's studies is an effective means of conveying a large body of information in a relatively short period of time. It is not a particularly effective or efficient framework for instruction within a constructivist framework, however. Rather than helping students develop their own strategies and approaches to the reading of literature, the teacher-centered classroom is much more likely to stress shared, canonical interpretations and group consensus. It is also likely to rely upon discussions in which some or all of the students are invited to respond to the teacher's questions, rather than upon discussions that engage each student in an extended exploration of his or her own ideas, developing them in the context of comparing them with others' views. (Note that the quarrel here is not with class discussions, or with instruction centered around shared experiences of books; it is with the presumption that such experiences should <u>begin</u> from the teacher's knowledge of correct interpretations, and <u>end</u> when those interpretations have been effectively conveyed to the group as a whole.)

The patterns of instruction revealed in the Center's studies reflect an English classroom

divided against itself. In the teaching of writing, teachers are more likely to emphasize the development of students' meaning-making abilities. Even if not fully accepted, process-oriented approaches to writing instruction are at least widely understood. In the teaching of literature, on the other hand, the focus on the student is likely to stop after an initial emphasis on developing motivation and interest. At that point, a focus on the text, with the attendant concern with common interpretations, the "right answers" of literary study, comes to the fore.

Issue 2. We need to develop a theory of the teaching and learning of literature to guide the rethinking of high school instruction.

If teachers are to shift the emphasis in instruction from the teacher and the text toward the student and the process of understanding, then they need a much clearer set of theoretical principles to guide instruction. Recent developments in critical theory have for the most part ignored pedagogical issues, and teachers in the Center's studies found little in current theory to revitalize their instructional approaches. Instead, they rely in their curriculum planning and day-to-day instruction on traditional organizational devices such as genre, chronology, and themes, on reader response theory to foster student involvement, and on New Critical approaches to provide techniques for the study of individual texts.

What is lacking is a well-articulated overall theory of the teaching and learning of literature to give a degree of order and coherence to the day-to-day decisions that teachers make about what and how to teach. What texts should they choose? How should they decide what questions to ask first about a literary work? How should a student's response be followed up? What kinds of writing about literature will lead to the development of more comprehensive interpretations? What does a "good" interpretation consist of? It is questions such as these that need to be revisited within a more comprehensive theoretical frame.

Relatively well-established traditions within the teaching of writing and reading have begun to provide such frameworks for those aspects of the English language arts. The teaching of literature, however, has until recently remained largely outside of recent movements in those fields.

One of the most comprehensive attempts to develop such a framework for the literature curriculum has been carried out by Judith Langer and her colleagues (see chapter 6). In a series of studies, they have been reexamining the process of understanding from the reader's point of view, and then using the results of that examination to rethink how literature instruction can best support students' efforts as they learn to become more effective readers. Such careful examination of the processes of teaching and learning are a necessary first step to the articulation of the principles of an effective constructivist framework for teaching and learning.

Issue 3. We need to revitalize instruction for non-college-bound students.

One of the clearest patterns to emerge from the Literature Center's studies is the extent to which non-college-bound students are given a more skills-oriented, and less interesting, program of study than are their college-bound peers. Compared with literature instruction for the college-bound, that for the non-college-bound has lower overall expectations, more emphasis on worksheets and study guides, less composition of coherent text, more quizzes and short-answer activities, less reading, more language study (i.e., grammar and usage), less individualized reading, and less use of the library.

Problems with programs for the non-college track are hardly a recent development; they were also one of the major findings of the Squire and Applebee (1968) study of exemplary programs in the early 1960s. For the most part, general or vocational programs in English are simply derivative of the college- preparatory program, with more emphasis on "skill and drill" and less on literature and the humanities. That teachers find these courses uninteresting to teach and students find them dull to take is hardly surprising. What is surprising is that the problems have continued so long without a serious attempt to find remedies that would make them more interesting, and more effective, for students and teachers alike.

Issue 4. We need to provide supportive institutional contexts for programs in literature.

Teachers of English do not work alone. The Center's case studies of programs with reputations for excellence (Applebee, 1989b) found that the best programs were characterized by strong departmental leadership, with an awareness of and trust in the professionalism of the classroom teacher. Many of the outstanding programs could also boast of abundant resources within the English department and in the school at large.

The national survey also highlighted the extent to which schools in all five samples relied upon experienced and well- trained teachers to carry out the program in literature; the quality of the faculty led the list of program strengths that teachers themselves cited. Also among the strengths that teachers cited were support from the principal and department chair.

Nonetheless, when the various samples of schools in the national survey are compared with each other, one of the major differences that emerges between the award-winning schools and the others is the level of resources available. The award- winning schools tend to have better libraries, more abundant resource materials, a larger array of literature-related extracurricular activities, and lighter teaching loads. Teachers in these schools are also more likely to rate the support of the community as a strength, and to have continued their own training beyond the master's level. Resources alone do not make for excellent programs, and many of the differences among schools reflect socioeconomic differences in the communities they serve. Nonetheless, when schools do not have adequate resources, it becomes much more difficult to provide students with a challenging program in literature.

Supportive institutional contexts consist of more than just money, however. They also consist of institutional structures at the school and district level that support teachers in their professionalism rather than constrain their power to make educationally sound decisions about the instruction they offer. The support of the department chair, the principal, and the community at large are all important to the development of a strong program in literature. This support involves

not only the endorsement of what teachers wish to do in their classrooms, but also the establishment of appropriate systems of evaluation (of students and of teachers)-- so that curriculum and assessment can work together to support student learning. Support at these levels will be particularly critical as teachers begin to change their approaches to literature, moving away from the teacher-centered whole-class discussions toward more innovative approaches.

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Chapter 3

The Selections Students Read for Literature Class

Arthur N. Applebee

The Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature was established in the midst of a still-continuing debate about the content of the English curriculum. Strong voices were arguing that the English curriculum was white, male, and Eurocentric, marginalizing the contributions of women and of people from other cultural traditions. Equally strong voices were reasserting the values of a traditional liberal education, and arguing that the curriculum in English had already been diluted too much. Bennett (1988) sought to reemphasize traditional academic disciplines, while Hirsch (1987) provided a new rationale for attention to such traditions, and coined a new goal, "cultural literacy," that seemed to require such attention.

What was lacking most in such debates, however, was much perspective on what was being taught in schools across the nation. What authors and titles were students actually being asked to read in their classes? What traditions and influences did those selections represent? How varied were the literary offerings in schools of different types and traditions?

Literature Center Studies

Clearly, a rethinking of the literature curriculum was needed, but to do this required a base of accurate information about the existing curriculum, its offerings, and its goals. (The last surveys of literature instruction date to the 1960s [Anderson, 1964; Squire & Applebee, 1968]; while these provide no information for understanding current practice, they serve as a point of comparison in understanding changes across a quarter of a century.) Such knowledge would provide a more accurate base for discussions of needed changes in the curriculum. In three of its studies, the Literature Center examined the authors and titles students were being asked to read:

National Study of Book-Length Books Students Are Required to Read. In the spring of 1988, English department chairs in nationally representative samples of public, Catholic, and independent schools were asked to list all of the book-length works that were required reading in any class, grades 7 through 12 (Applebee, 1989); 488 schools participated in the study. The wording of the question and the structure of the the survey replicated a survey conducted 25 years previously, in the spring of 1963 (Anderson, 1964). This provided a baseline account of the range of book-length works read as well as a point of comparison to highlight any changes that had occurred in the selections themselves.

National Survey of the Teaching of Literature. Book-length works are only one part of the curriculum, however, and departmental reports of required texts may look quite different from teachers' day-to-day choices. To provide a second perspective, the Center examined teachers' choices as part of a survey of the teaching of literature in 650 junior and senior high schools in the spring of 1988 (Applebee, 1990). The survey included nationally representative samples of public schools, Catholic schools, and independent schools; a complete sample of schools that had been selected as Centers of Excellence by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE); and a complete sample of schools that had consistently had winners in the Achievement Awards program sponsored by NCTE. In one series of questions, teachers were asked to identify a specific class which was "representative" of their teaching of literature, and to list all of the selections that students had studied (for homework or in class) during the previous 5 school days.

Analyses of Popular Anthologies. While the first study focused on book-length works, the classroom studies indicated that many teachers used anthologies as a mainstay of their literature programs. Thus the Center also studied the authors and titles presented in those antholgoies. The 1989 editions of the seven anthology series that were used most frequently in the schools in the national survey were examined in order to characterize the nature of the selections included in them (Applebee, 1991). The complete high school course, grades 7 through 12, was analyzed. Results were compared with the last major analysis of high school English textbooks (Lynch & Evans,

1963), which examined the literature anthologies in use in the late 1950s.

Results from these studies allow examination of the sources of the literary materials teachers use, the relative emphasis they place upon different types of literature, and the characteristics of the authors represented in their classrooms and in the anthologies available to them.

Book-Length Works

The Center's first attempt to examine the characteristics of selections for study was the national survey of the book-length works required of any students at a particular grade level (Applebee, 1989). Replicating Anderson's (1964) earlier study, the study found a variety of changes in emphasis on specific titles, but stability in the overall nature of the selections for study. Indeed, rather than a watering down of the curriculum over the preceding 25 years, the study's results suggested that there may have been some narrowing, with a larger number of titles being relatively consistently cited. In the spring of 1963, for example, only 9 titles were required in at least some classes in 30 percent or more of the schools; this had tripled to 27 titles in the spring of 1988. There was also a decline in the proportion of titles published in the 30 years previous to the survey, from 39 percent in 1963 to 28 percent in 1988.

The "top ten" titles in the three main samples are listed in Table 1. Although the rank ordering of titles differs somewhat in the three samples, they are remarkable for their consistency more than their differences: the titles included in the top ten are identical in the public and Catholic school samples, and nearly so in the independent schools.

It is noteworthy that in all three samples, the top ten included only one title by a female author (Harper Lee) and none by members of minority groups. When the responses were examined by author rather than by title, Shakespeare, Steinbeck, and Dickens led the lists in all three samples.

Lists of "top ten" authors and titles can be misleading, however, particularly if there is less consensus about alternative texts than there is about the more traditional ones. To provide a better

Table 1
Most Popular Titles, Grades 9-12

Title and Percent of Schools

Public Schools		Catholic Schools		Independent Schools	
Romeo and Juliet	84%	Huckleberry Finn	76%	Macbeth	74%
Macbeth	81	Scarlet Letter	70	Romeo and Juliet	66
Huckleberry Finn	70	Macbeth	70	Huckleberry Finn	56
Julius Caesar	70	To Kill a Mockingbird	67	Scarlet Letter	52
To Kill a Mockingbird	69	Great Gatsby	64	Hamlet	51
Scarlet Letter	62	Romeo and Juliet	63*	Great Gatsby	49
Of Mice and Men	56	Hamlet	60	To Kill a Mockingbird	47*
Hamlet	55	Of Mice and Men	56	Julius Caesar	42*
Great Gatsby	54	Julius Caesar	54	Odyssey	39
Lord of the Flies	54	Lord of the Flies	52	Lord of the Flies	34

* Percentage significantly different from public school sample, $p < .05$.

overview of the book length works reported to us, each appearance of a title was coded for the gender, race/ethnicity, and national literary tradition of the author, as well as for date of publication.

Examined in this way, the titles reported in this study were drawn from a relatively narrow tradition of texts for classroom study. Of the 11,579 individual selections reported to us in the public school sample, for example, 81 percent were by male authors, 98 percent by white (non-Hispanic) authors, and 99 percent were written within a United States (63 percent), United Kingdom (28 percent), or Western European (8 percent) tradition. Compared with Anderson's (1964) results from 25 years previously, there were only marginal increases in the percent of selections written by women (from 17 percent in 1963 to 19 percent in 1988) or by writers from alternative cultural traditions (from 0.6 percent to 2 percent). At the same time, there was an increase in the percent of selections by U.S. authors (from 49 percent to 63 percent), with a corresponding decline in the percent from the United Kingdom (from 39 percent to 28 percent).

The narrowness of the selections in this first study was surprising, and as a result later studies continued to examine the characteristics of the authors and titles being taught. Three factors in particular seemed possible sources of distortion in the study of book-length works: the emphasis on "required" texts nominated by department chairs, which might miss greater variation introduced by individual teachers in their own classrooms; the emphasis on book-length works, which could miss a greater variety in shorter works, including stories and poems; and the request for a list of all titles at each grade, which again might have led to some under-representation of less widely- taught individual works that might have come less quickly to mind.

Titles Taught in the Past Five Days

To get around all of those problems, the national survey asked teachers to list all of the specific titles that students had read or discussed for class or homework during the previous 5 school days. Teachers were prompted separately for novels, short stories, plays, poetry, nonfiction, film or video, and "any other" types of literature.

Approached in this way, teachers' selections were still very narrow. Across genres, only 16 percent of the works taught during the previous 5 days were written by women (compared with 19 percent in the study of book-length works), but 7 percent were by nonwhite authors (compared with 2 percent in the study of book length works). Much of the increase in non-white authors was due to a better representation of alternative traditions in the poetry that was taught; indeed, in this particular sample Langston Hughes emerged as the individual poet who had been taught most frequently in the previous five days.

Genres Emphasized in Class Study

Literature is a somewhat ambiguous concept in the teaching of English, including in different classrooms a range of genres and media. One way to gain a sense of what "counts" most is to examine the amount of time teachers devote to literature of various types. Thus the national survey asked teachers about the amount of literature-related class time that had been devoted to particular genres during the past five days, irrespective of the source of the selections. Their responses reflected the central role that book-length works play: In the public schools, teachers reported an average of 31 percent of the time had been spent on novels and 20 percent on plays. Attention to other types of literature included 23 percent of the time devoted to short stories, 14 percent to poetry, 6 percent to nonfiction, and 5 percent to film or video. Reports from teachers in other samples did not differ significantly from these percentages. The importance of book-length texts was emphasized in teachers' responses to questions about how they organized the curriculum for a specific class: study of individual major works emerged as the most frequently cited approach to structuring the curriculum.

Sources of Literary Materials

In the national survey, for teachers in the random sample of public schools the literature anthology was the most frequent source of materials (used "regularly" by 66 percent of the teach-

ers), followed by class sets of book-length texts (52 percent) and dittoed or photocopied supplementary materials (44 percent). The biggest differences among the five samples of schools occurred for books students purchased, which were common in Catholic and independent schools and rare in public schools. Class sets of book-length texts were also somewhat more readily available in the two samples of award-winning schools (where they ranked slightly higher than anthologies as sources of literary materials).

The role of the anthology was highlighted in another series of questions, when teachers were asked about the extent to which they used them: 63 percent of the public school teachers reported an anthology was their "main source" of selections, and another 28 percent reported using an anthology for supplementary readings. Overall teachers were quite pleased with the quality of the materials available in the anthologies they used: 41 percent rated the selections as "excellent," and another 51 percent rated them as at least "adequate"; only 8 percent rated the selections in the anthologies as "poor" in the context of the needs of a specific class.

Analyses of Popular Anthologies

The final set of selections that the Center examined were those included in the 7th through 12th grade volumes of the seven anthology series that were most frequently in use in the schools in the national survey. The study examined the most recent editions of each series (copyright 1989), compiling a master list of authors and titles and identifying the gender, race/ethnicity, national tradition within which the author wrote, and date of composition of the selection.

Across grade levels, some 21 percent of the anthology selections were written by women, and 14 percent were by non-white authors, proportions that suggest somewhat more variety in representation than was the case in the two studies of classroom practice.

To examine this further, Table 2 summarizes results across the three studies, separately for the major genres that were examined in each study. In this table, it is clear that nonwhite authors are better represented in the selections of poetry and of nonfiction than they are in other genres, while

Table 2

Comparison Between Selections Anthologized, Taught, and Required

	Long Fiction	Plays	Short Fiction	Poetry	Non-Fiction	All
Female Authors						
Anthologized[a]	9.8	9.0	27.5	20.6	20.9	21.3
Taught[b]	21.4	4.5	18.1	16.6	14.5	16.3
Required[c]	22.7	3.6				19.1
Non-white Authors						
Anthologized	0.0	1.8	10.8	13.2	17.8	13.5
Taught[a]	3.9	1.5	2.2	12.0	12.1	6.6
Required	1.7	2.6				2.0

[a] Applebee (1991)
[b] Applebee (1990)
[c] Applebee (1989)

women are least well represented in the plays that are taught. The anthologies seem to have a somewhat broader range of selections than teachers report using, but this is so only for the shorter selections (which are included in reasonable numbers in each anthology volume); selections of long fiction included in the anthologies are particularly narrow.

There were some other interesting trends in the nature of the selections. In general there was more variety in authors and titles in the selections used in grades 7 through 10, and the least variety in the selections chosen for American and British literature. The chronologically organized British literature anthologies were by far the narrowest, with only 8 percent of the selections by women, and 1 percent by non-white authors.

Compared with Lynch and Evans' (1963) study of the contents of anthologies in the late 1950s, the 1989 anthologies show more consensus on the authors and titles included, fewer selections published in the previous 60 years, and less variety from one publisher to another in degree of emphasis on each genre. In the context of Lynch and Evans' critique, the 1989 anthologies seem to include selections of better quality, with less of the "ephemera" and "miscellany" of which they had complained. At the same time, women and minority authors figure more prominently in the 1989 editions, particularly in the poetry and nonfiction selections.

Influences on Teachers' Choices

The results, then, suggest that the curriculum as a whole remains relatively traditional in its emphases. Most teachers in the Center's surveys reported they had considerable leeway in selecting the literature they taught; only 5 percent claimed to have little or none. Asked what influenced their selections for a specific class, they cited literary merit, personal familiarity with the selection, and likely appeal to students as the three most important influences. Departmental policies and possible community reaction to specific titles also played a part.

Looking at teachers' responses as a whole, there seem to be three reasons why relatively few

selections from alternative traditions have yet to be included in the curriculum: teachers remain personally unfamiliar with specific titles, are uncertain about their literary merit and appeal to students, and are worried about possible community reactions.

Conclusion

When literature emerged at the core of English studies at the end of the nineteenth century, it coalesced around a particular vision of the values of literature, and of texts that were important to read and to teach (Applebee, 1974). That tradition has usually been defined rather broadly, around important authors and traditions rather than around a few essential texts. When specific texts have been singled out for special attention, as they have been at times as part of college entrance requirements, the texts have changed from year to year rather than being elevated into the content of the curriculum.

Thus for most of the history of the teaching of English, the high school canon has been a sampling out of a broader tradition: some plays by Shakespeare, some poems from the Augustans, some contemporary works of "good" authors, some classical myths and legends, some prose and poetry of the Romantic era, and some selections from the American tradition. When Stout (1989), for example, compiled a list of specific titles taught in English courses in the North Central region before 1900, he found 14 that were taught in more than 25 percent of the schools, but over 200 more titles that were taught in some of the schools in the region.

Studying selections sixty years later, Lynch and Evans (1963) complained that the selections that were being sampled from these traditions had become too broad, drawing in a variety of selections chosen simply because they related to a topic of study rather than because of any inherent literary merit.

Boosted by the concerns of the New Critics with the integrity of the text, the reassertion of literary values of which Lynch and Evans were a part seems to have had some effect. In the Literature Center's studies of selections being taught another 30 years later, the curriculum seems

to have narrowed again. Although there remains a great deal of variety, there is more consensus about particular texts, and especially about particular authors, both in the anthologized selections and in the book-length works required by high school departments of English.

Even as the curriculum has tightened around works of acknowledged quality, additional room has been made for authors from alternative traditions. Works by women seem in particular to be better represented than they were 25 or 30 years ago, particularly among the anthologized selections. Authors from other racial or ethnic traditions are also better represented.

Yet with these gains, the most striking feature of these analyses is how narrow much of the curriculum remains. Works by women still make up less than a third of the reading students are asked to do for their English courses in grades 7 through 12, and works by non-white authors less than 8 percent. Representation is even less balanced when novels and plays are considered separately-- the major works that are for many teachers the heart of the curriculum. As long as these texts remain unchanged, there will be no "canonicity" for nonwhite authors or for women; they will continue to be at the margins of the culture that is legitimated by its place in the school.

The issue, of course, is not simply one of insuring that students read works from their own heritage. It is an issue of finding the proper balance among the many traditions, separate and intertwined, that make up the complex fabric of American society. In their instruction, teachers need to find better ways to insure that programs are culturally relevant as well as culturally fair-- that no group is privileged while others are marginalized by the selections schools choose to teach. At the same time, teachers must also be wary of a curriculum that becomes too "particularized" (Ravitch, 1990), polarizing the separate traditions which contribute to America's diversity, rather than increasing students' understanding of and respect for traditions other than their own.

Resolving the tensions between diverse traditions and a common heritage poses difficult philosophical as well as educational questions. The particular solutions that schools and teachers adopt are likely to be closely tailored to the history and values of their local community, at least to the extent that that is possible within the restrictions of available textbooks and limited budgets.

The Literature Center studies do not provide answers about what the ideal curriculum will be in any particular situation, but they at least provide a common, comprehensive base of information in which those debates can be grounded.

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Chapter 4

Elementary School Literature Instruction

Sean Walmsley

The major focus of research conducted by the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature over the past three years has been at the secondary level (grades 7-12). In the original proposal for the Center, we added a small research component to study the teaching of literature at the elementary level (grades 1-6) on the grounds that what students know about literature, what books they read, and how they respond to literature are heavily influenced by their literary experiences in elementary school. We proposed two kinds of studies to explore elementary school literary experiences: one that sought to describe, from elementary teachers' perspectives, the role of literature in their language arts program and the major instructional practices they used to foster children's literary growth; the other that sought to describe the actual literary experiences of a small number of students in elementary school.

We came into these studies knowing that elementary language arts programs are dominated by reading skills instruction, usually delivered through a commercial basal reading system, in which children read material that is either written especially for the basal, or which has been excerpted (frequently with revisions to make the language more readable, the content less controversial) from children's literature. It has been estimated, however, that the average elementary school reader gets to read connected text for only 6-7 minutes daily, and so contact with literature, even if it is provided, tends to be brief in duration, and involves primarily excerpts from literature. The separation of literature from reading is evident in the research community, too. Barely a word is mentioned (other than to reference work done by principal investigators of our studies) in the latest Handbook of Reading Research about the nature of literary understanding, despite extensive reviews of research on reading comprehension. It is as though there are two communities, one that researches reading and promulgates approaches to reading instruction, the other which examines

children's literature and makes recommendations about how it should be taught (Huck et al., 1987). The two areas are quite distinct, each having their own research base, their own views about the role of the other, even their own professional organizations-- International Reading Association, National Reading Conference for reading teachers and researchers; National Council of Teachers of English (Elementary Section), American Library Association for educators interested in children's literature. In general, the reading field has seen literature as the end purpose for learning how to read (i.e., what children do once they have mastered the basic reading skills); the children's literature field has been more concerned about the books themselves, and less about instructional issues, but authorities in children's literature have always questioned the reading field's insistence that reading skills come first, arguing-- as Huck has-- that literature itself should be the reading curriculum. In recent years, the situation has changed somewhat with a surge of interest in children's literature at the elementary level, and a visitor to an IRA or NCTE annual meeting might be excused for thinking that the same people attended both, and that both organizations were basically interested in the same things (reading, writing, literature). About ten years ago, reading issues dominated the agenda of the IRA, slowly to give way to an interest in writing (spurred by the New Hampshire school of "process" writing); now it is the turn of children's literature. It is almost impossible to go to a national or regional reading conference without encountering a famous children's author as a keynote speaker, or hearing an advocate of children's literature in the classroom.

In elementary schools, too, there are signs that literature is enjoying a revival after 20 years of neglect. It is not hard to see why. Advocates of "Whole Language" are adamant that children's literature (trade books) should replace the basal readers they so strongly oppose; interestingly, critics such as Ravitch and Finn (1987) also recommend that literature replace bland basals, although we suspect the titles they think children should be reading will more likely be drawn from traditional literature while whole language advocates more frequently stress contemporary children's literature, much of it narrative fiction. States are sponsoring programs that encourage reading of

children's literature at home (e.g., The New York State Legislature's Parents As Reading Partners); businesses offer culinary rewards to children who turn in lists of books read at home (e.g., Pizza Hut's Book-It Program); most elementary schools now subscribe to one or another of the book clubs (e.g., See-Saw, Trumpet) that make it easy for children to acquire books for themselves. Reading to children in school has become a permanent feature of the early grades (i.e. kindergarten through 3rd grade), and most elementary schools have some form of independent reading program (e.g., Lyman Hunt's Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading), in which children read books on their own for 15 minutes or so each day.

School libraries have also undergone changes in the past ten years; although school librarians still teach "library" skills to elementary children (e.g., looking up books in the card catalog or CD-ROM, learning how to research), many librarians use these "library" periods to read literature to children, as well as to guide them in their selection of books. There are school librarians whose notion of a good school library is that absolute quiet prevails, and that every book is accounted for, but increasingly school (and public) librarians see themselves as having an instructional rather than merely a bibliographic role in the school's language arts program. Finally, we are aware that many elementary teachers have begun to acquire-- often with their own money-- children's books for their own classroom libraries, so that children can participate in literature without having to leave the room.

It was against this backdrop that we interviewed a number of elementary teachers, supervisors and librarians in the Albany, New York, area to determine their views on these issues, and to see how they used literature in their schools. The details of this study are described elsewhere (Walmsley & Walp, 1989); here, I want to discuss the implications of this study relative to the issues discussed above. The interviews suggest that many elementary teachers really do not have either an instructional philosophy for the teaching of literature, nor even a well developed practical scheme for integrating it within the elementary curriculum. Nor, surprisingly, do their supervisors or administrators. We heard about how individual teachers fitted literature into their

curriculum, largely from the perspective of routines (reading aloud, independent reading, class reading of a single book); we heard very little about the purpose of these activities, other than they were "for fun," or "to teach reading skills." For example, should we not read books to children partly to introduce them to new authors, to new topics, and to vocabulary and syntax beyond the children's current understanding? (The teachers we interviewed generally read books that children themselves could already read.) Wouldn't it be appropriate to use literature to teach children something about literary techniques? (The teachers talked only about teaching reading skills through literature.) Should there not be some planning to ensure that children are exposed to a variety of literary genres? (The teachers seemed not to have such a plan, but their examples indicated a strong emphasis on contemporary realistic fiction.) Despite our probes, which were quite extensive, we heard almost nothing about the bigger picture-- i.e., how they thought reading and literature were connected, what the role of writing was in literary understanding, what pedagogical purpose was served by reading books aloud. Later, we reflected that this "bigger picture" is precisely what is missing in the research literature on both reading and children's literature, and we should hardly be surprised that elementary teachers, supervisors, and administrators did not address it.

We concluded that elementary literature programs comprise a set of routines that teachers have acquired for use in their classrooms, and other than the occasional and usually out-of-date list of books to be read independently at each grade, or over the summer, we saw little evidence of a coherent, articulated district philosophy with respect to literature's role in the language arts program, across grades and across different levels of reading and writing ability. Nor did we hear about how the elementary literature program was to be coordinated with the secondary school's English syllabus -- in the schools our teachers described, there was little or no communication between elementary and secondary school to begin with, and even less about the content of the elementary and secondary literature programs. We wondered how the elementary literature program, with its diet of largely contemporary realistic fiction, prepares children for the secondary

literature program, with its canon of largely classical literature (Applebee, 1989). Our concern about these findings, however, is that without a much clearer sense about how literature fits into the elementary curriculum, it will simply comprise a set of teaching activities (read-alouds, independent reading, library time) that will constantly be in competition with new demands on elementary teachers' time. The amount of time allocated to the teaching of literature in elementary school is a a small fraction of that allocated to the teaching of reading skills.

In contrast to the detailed record-keeping and monitoring of reading skills instruction, teachers seemed to know little about which full-length books their students had read on their own. Further, they were generally unaware of the books their colleagues were reading to their students, or assigning to be read. Most of the teachers we interviewed had little formal training in literature (especially when compared to their extensive backgrounds in reading)-- most of what they knew they claimed was through their own reading, and from children's literature workshops. These circumstances do not seem to us conducive to the teaching of literature becoming "institutionalized" in the sense of being permanently woven into the elementary school's curriculum in the same way that reading instruction currently is. What we fear is that unless the role of literature is properly articulated, the current interest in it will eventually pass, to be replaced by something else. This has already happened to writing in many elementary schools: the time which used to be devoted to process writing is now devoted to children's literature. Whatever is "au courant" gets attention. We heard little from our teachers about how their districts were attempting to "institutionalize" the teaching of literature, although it was clear that certain teaching routines had become institutionalized to get started, at least.

A good example of the challenge of institutionalizing the teaching of literature in elementary schools is represented by the tensions between classroom teachers and school librarians over their respective roles. These tensions have arisen, we believe, because both classroom teachers and school librarians, unbeknownst to one another, have changed their own attitude towards literature. Many elementary classroom teachers were used to seeing the school librarian's role as essentially

bibliographic (to order books for the library, handle signing out and checking in of books, and to teach library skills), and when they got the "literature bug," they thought nothing of developing their own classroom library. At the same time, many school librarians have been trying to shake off their "bibliographer" image, and they see themselves as playing a major role in the development of a literature program-- after all, aren't they the experts on literature? Many of the librarians we interviewed were not pleased to have been excluded from the planning of school literature programs, and few were reticent about comparing their extensive knowledge of children's literature with what they regarded as most classroom teachers' shallow literary understanding. Most thought that the school library, not the classroom, was the appropriate place for book collections.

It is not difficult to understand these tensions from both perspectives, but they provide good evidence of how poorly elementary literature programs are articulated, and point to the need for better collaboration between the various professionals that have responsibility for the provision both of books and of instructional activities to promote children's use of them. This leaves open the issue of whether children should be explicitly taught how to use the library (a major component of "library time"). Most of the teachers and librarians we interviewed think they should: they would not have agreed with Moffett and Wagner (1983) whose advice on this issue was: "Children do not need to learn how to become librarians; rather they need to feel competent and comfortable as library users."

A second issue we explored was the differential treatment of better and poorer readers. We went into this study assuming that better readers received preferential treatment over poorer readers, not only because many elementary literature programs are designed for top reading groups (these better readers have already 'mastered' reading skills and therefore are ready to apply them to books), but also because poor readers are assumed not to have the prerequisite reading skills for tackling full-length books. The teachers we interviewed did differentiate between better and poorer readers; they encouraged better readers to pick "harder" and more challenging books, while recommending "easier" titles to poorer readers. Teachers that used basal readers admitted that

better readers were able to spend more time in school reading independently, because they could use the time left over after seat work was completed in addition to assigned independent reading time. (This confirms earlier findings in the remedial literature [e.g., Allington, 1983].) In both independent and read-aloud activities, teachers reported few differences in their teaching strategies for good and poor readers, other than in the selection of books. Both good and poor readers shared in the same read-aloud activities (mostly because these occur in homerooms). On the other hand, poorer readers were less likely to encounter full-length literature in guided reading instruction, because guided reading was taught in reading groups, not in whole classes, using a basal reader. Teachers felt that poor readers were already "behind schedule" in the basal series so they could not afford to take time to read books. Poorer readers generally were taken through books with more structure, with more teacher direction, at a slower pace, and were expected to concentrate more on literal understanding of what they read.

Our study of second graders' literary experiences (Walmsley, Fielding, & Walp, 1991) offers a different perspective on this issue, as has our school-based literature curriculum project (Walmsley & Walp, 1990). What we have found is that when better and poorer readers are placed in what we call a 'literature-rich' environment (one in which ample opportunities for engaging in full-length literature are provided, where both reading and literary skills are taught primarily within the context of literature, and where children are not assigned to high, middle, and low reading groups), the differences between better and poorer readers become less pronounced. In the long term (Walmsley & Walp, 1990), a literature-based elementary language arts curriculum offers significant advantages to both better and poorer readers; in the short term (Walmsley, Fielding, & Walp, 1991), we noted that in both a literature-only classroom and one that mixes basal instruction with literature, there were gender differences between children's literary experiences (the girls read far more books than the boys), but not differences based on reading ability alone, except in circumstances where children were left on their own to read independently or write about books (the poorer readers more frequently "disengaged" from the task at hand).

We are cautious about extending our observations beyond the classrooms we studied, but we wonder if part of the problem with poor readers and their literary experiences stems from observing them within the confines of a traditional approach that routinely treats them as incapable of engaging with literature, systematically denies them access to literature, and creates in them lowered expectations and ambitions to read on their own. If children are treated as individual readers, not good or average or poor readers, especially on the basis of reading achievement test scores that barely touch on children's literary knowledge or experiences, then they stand a better chance of being treated equally as far as access to literature is concerned, and, more importantly, they may develop more positive (or, at least, less negative) images of themselves as readers. Given the number of books now published that even non-readers can gain meaning from, it becomes increasingly less excusable to say that there are readers who are "not ready" to read books. We are also concerned that if poorer readers do not frequently engage in full-length literature, they will be hard pressed to acquire strategies for understanding anything but simple plots and boldly drawn characters (the ones that characterize short extracts or specially written passages in basal readers). They also will have difficulty moving through books in which there are "shifting horizons" of meaning (see Langer, 1989), a feature of full-length literature largely absent from excerpts and shorter passages.

We have also learned from our studies of 2nd graders' literary experiences that at least in some classrooms, teachers are providing children with not only substantial literary experiences, but exposure to a wide range of genres, authors, and types of books (e.g., picture story books, illustrated story books, chapter books). While we were not surprised by the number of realistic fiction and fantasy books read to and by the 2nd graders we studied, we were taken aback by how many informational books were read. This finding may not be welcome news to those seeking to redress the balance in favor of traditional literature in elementary school, but it should be applauded by those (e.g., Venezky, 1987) who think that elementary schools seriously neglect nonfictional reading. We also were impressed by the amount of time devoted to reading aloud full-length

literature, discussing it, and writing about it in the classrooms we studied. Our only reservation is that we suspect that the teachers we observed may be emphasizing literature at the expense of other aspects of language arts, and especially other subject areas (social studies, science). It is further evidence that elementary schools do not yet seem to have found the right balance between components of language arts, and between language arts and other important aspects of the elementary curriculum (see Walmsley, 1991); while one aspect is emphasized, other aspects are getting short shrift.

Taken as a whole, these studies describe the philosophy and practices of a number of elementary teachers in a variety of schools in upstate New York, and the literary experiences of a few 2nd graders in great detail. The detailed portraits of the second graders were made in literature-rich environments, and they show what happens when children are surrounded by literature at home and in school. These children, their parents, and their teachers are taking good advantage of the wealth and range of literature available to them, and while they engage in this literature differentially (there were significant gender differences, but also important individual differences), it is clear that their literary experiences are broad and substantial, at least during the year in which we studied them. What we conclude from these studies is that while children may be enjoying worthwhile literary experiences in individual classrooms, they have yet to be exposed to a coherent, "institutionalized" literature program across the elementary grades that fosters what Britton terms "wide reading side by side with close reading" (Pradl, 1982). We have yet to work out how reading instruction and literary experiences interact, and how, in practical terms, literature is to be properly incorporated into the elementary curriculum without it displacing an equally important aspect of language arts, or another subject area. Our studies of better and poorer readers have left us in some doubt about the relationship between reading ability-- as traditionally defined-- and literary knowledge and ability: Are there reading skill prerequisites for engaging successfully in literature, or does the understanding of literature call upon different processing abilities than those traditionally thought of as essential components of reading? Do books provide children with cues

they can use to gain access to a book's meaning that allow even traditionally poor readers to make sense of what they read in books? To what extent do children learn the strategies they need for processing text in books by engaging in literature as opposed to learning them in isolation to literature? Our studies and curriculum projects lead us to think that meaningful experiences with literature may help develop the strategies typically taught in reading programs (e.g., vocabulary, comprehension, word attack), but they also teach children strategies for processing literary texts that traditional reading programs do not specifically teach, and are not directly transferable to literary texts. Certainly the traditional notion that elementary schools are for teaching reading skills that, once mastered, allow children to read books with understanding, needs to be challenged.

Finally, it is clear from these studies that we should be concerned about elementary literature programs from the perspective of how they prepare students for secondary school literature programs. There may be some sense in not basing elementary school literature programs too closely on what secondary teachers think are appropriate antecedents, for there are clearly genres, authors, and types of books that are well suited to children at younger ages and it is unlikely that secondary English teachers are in a good position to know what these are. (Business people have a similar problem in recommending specific kinds of reading activities for elementary and secondary school, based on extrapolating their adult literacy needs downwards into grade schools.) What is inexcusable is the almost total lack of communication between elementary and secondary language arts programs, and the resulting ignorance about what each is up to. Elementary teachers have their work cut out for them (much more so than secondary teachers) in designing appropriate and cumulative literary experiences for children across the elementary years, but once that is under control, they urgently need to coordinate elementary literary experiences with secondary.

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Chapter 5

Assessing Learning in Literature

Alan C. Purves

The nation's testing programs devote a great deal of energy to testing reading and writing, but they fail to treat literature and cultural literacy seriously. The artistic aspects of literature and the cultural heritage of our society are not reflected in the nation's tests and as a result they are neglected by the schools. The tests concentrate on prose fiction and exclude poetry and drama. Such was the finding of the first study in the assessment strand conducted by the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature (Brody, DeMilo, & Purves, 1989). The research program began with an examination of existing tests and studies of their influence and then moved to explorations with alternative tests.

The Current State of Literature Testing

The Center's studies of current practices in literature assessment examined the range of instruments that are used across the United States to assess the literature knowledge of students across the grades: norm-referenced standardized achievement batteries, tests of reading comprehension, tests that accompany literature anthologies and basal readers, college entrance and college placement examinations, and commerical tests of literature achievement. The results indicate that, almost universally, the focus of existing literature tests is on the comprehension of content, particularly on the meaning of specific parts or of the main idea or theme of a passage which is given to the student to read (Brody, DeMilo, & Purves, 1989). Across the various tests studied, a typical test has a two-paragraph excerpt from a novel or story followed by three or four questions like these fictitious examples:

In line 10, the word roque means: a) stranger, b) out of control, c) colored with red, d) falling apart

The two people are: a) father and son, b) brothers, c) husband and wife, d) strangers

This selection is about: a) the end of an adventure, b) the relationship between people and animals, c) the climax of a journey, d) the break-up of a family

Such questions hardly tap the imaginative power of literary works; in fact they reduce them to the level of textbooks where the recall of facts is given precedence over students' growing ability to interpret. Some published tests go so far as to ask true or false questions like: Huckleberry Finn is a good boy, or Hamlet is mad. The only reasonable response to either question is "Yes, it is both true and false." As a result of being bombarded by such tests, students find that they do not have to read the selection; they can turn to plot summaries or simplified study guides.

Our team found existing tests focus their attention on text comprehension at a relatively low level of understanding. They do so without a clear differentiation between reading a literary selection and reading a non-literary one; any text is viewed as having a content that can be easily summarized into a single main idea, point, gist, or theme.

Is this the way we want our children to see literature? Literature is a complex and artistic use of words to stimulate readers' imaginations. Reading and studying literature should make readers aware of the beauty and power of the language as well as of the richness of the cultural heritage from all parts of the world. Literature has the ability to take readers out of their world and into other worlds, to make them laugh or cry, to challenge their beliefs, to make them wonder.

Is Huck Finn a good boy? Whose standards are we to use? Those of his society or those of the author? Is Hamlet mad? What is madness and what is acting? Can a mad person make such clever remarks or be so deliberate in his actions? These are questions to explore, to ponder, to challenge us. Literature and its teaching should offer our students intellectual challenges such as how they should interpret and evaluate words and language and poems. Literature and its teaching should bring our students pleasure of the emotion and of the mind. Literature and its teaching

should open our students to the beauty of words and expression and ideas. But how do they view it?

How Students See Literature Learning. One of the most useful sources of information on the topic of what constitutes school achievement can come from the subjects of instruction, the students themselves. These people are expert in being students and knowing the rules of the game of school. To tap their perceptions, the Center carried out another study (Purves, Li, McCann, & Renken, 1991), using an instrument parallel to one already perfected in the analysis of written composition instruction (Takala, 1983). In that study students were asked to give advice on how to do well in school composition. The results showed clearly that students focussed upon issues of format, spelling, grammar, and other surface features rather than on content and organization. The implications for instruction appeared clear; teachers were signalling with their red pencils their real concerns, which were at variance with their professed concerns.

To study students' views of literature learning, we asked secondary school students to write on the following topic:

Write a letter of advice to someone two years younger than yourself who has asked you to explain how to do well in literature classes in your school. Write a friendly letter and include in it five specific pieces of advice.

The results indicate that the largest proportion of the advice to prospective literature students dealt with strategies and tactics which tend not to be part of the announced curriculum. A large proportion of responses dealt with classroom strategies, particularly test-taking strategies. The students' responses mentioned such strategies as where to sit or whether to be called on or to

volunteer. Much of the advice in this category referred to strategies with regard to homework (you should get it in on time), and test-taking (it's better to have English second period so you can get the questions from the first period students). All of this advice is eminently practical, although distant from the teachers' professed concerns.

A relatively large proportion of the advice students gave dealt with reading, but concentrated on such procedures as reading on an empty stomach, how to sit while reading, or where to read. Another segment of advice about reading dealt with whether or not to skim first, whether to underline or take notes. Still another category of advice dealt with ancillary aids. Some of the writers advised calling a friend who had read the book, talking to one's parents, or, most frequently, using Cliff's Notes.

Another fairly frequent type of advice dealt with general attitudes towards school and reading. Students were urged to treat school seriously, to become involved in their work, and to take literature seriously.

By contrast relatively few responses dealt with specific literary matters or with mental activities while reading. And by and large few dealt with writing about what was read. The results complement the findings of the study of tests. It would appear that successful work in school literature is seen as part of a "game" of reading to take tests, which are seen as comprehension tests. Students do not read for enjoyment, for enlargement of one's understanding, for a desire to appreciate the classics. Literature in schools appears to be a serious business clearly related to grades and achievement, and little related to the lofty aims which literature and literature education set for themselves.

There were differences among the schools in the study, but, more importantly, there were clear differences among the basic, average, and honors tracks. The most striking difference was the comparatively infrequent mention of writing by the basic track students. Students in honors and advanced placement classes mentioned writing most often and in the greatest variety. They also mentioned a focus on the literary aspects of reading. It would appear that reading literature as

literature and writing about literature are most clearly the road to success for the students in the higher track. The low road to success focuses on the physical aspects of reading and managing oneself in the classroom.

Teachers' Views of Student Achievement. A related set of studies (Johnston, Afflerbach, & Weiss, 1990) examined the ways in which classroom teachers viewed tests and students; the results showed that in low-achieving classrooms, teachers saw their students only through the lens of test scores, but in more affluent and higher achieving classrooms, such tests played a minor role. Teachers there viewed their students in terms of the books they read and used much more anecdotal and observational information. They also tended to know much more about individuals. Whether these differences resulted from the tests administered in the schools or from other factors was not determined, but we may conclude that for the lower performing classrooms, a change in the assessment procedures might well enhance a change in perception. Such a change might also affect the ways in which students view literature and its teaching and learning.

By and large the tests that now exist in the United States deny the power of literature to capture the imagination. They treat literary texts as if they were no different from articles in encyclopedias or research reports. These tests are ubiquitous, pervasive, and powerful, calling the curricular tune of the real world of the schools. This being so, it would seem difficult for teachers and their students to see literature as anything but dead and lifeless.

Reconstructing Assessment: Alternative Views of Literature Learning

How might we better enable schools and students take a more active role in the learning of literature? I think we can do so through reconstructing our tests. To do so, we need to consider two issues: what do we mean by learning in literature and what is the nature of difficulty in literature learning? Through such a rational process, we can begin to say what sorts of things would best constitute evidence that students have grown and developed in the ways that literature teachers see as most valuable and important.

The Center staff undertook a review of the various statements about the goals and aims of literature teaching (Purves, Li, & Shirk, 1990), and the results showed that there were three complementary or competing views of the domain: that literature is an adjunct of the language arts, that it comprises a distinct body of knowledge, and that it is an aspect of aesthetic perception. Thus literature is seen alternatively as a stimulus for reading and writing, as an aspect of the humanities, and as one of the arts.

School literature has often been fitted--rather uncomfortably--into "the language arts," which are defined as reading, writing, speaking and listening. Since literature involves texts that people read or write, and since when students read literature they often write about what they have read, literature is often seen as simply a subset of reading and writing, with an occasional nod to speaking and listening. Literature fits into the program as something pleasant to read and perhaps as something interesting to write about. This view seems to prevail in the basal reading approach to elementary schools (see Walmsley, 1989), and it carries on into the secondary school curriculum. Literature is a content to promote skills in reading and writing or to promote individual growth, depending upon the ideology attached to the language arts. In the current world of tests, literature is usually a vehicle for testing reading comprehension or for measures of writing skill or proficiency.

A second perspective shows literature as a school subject with its own body of knowledge. This knowledge consists primarily of literary texts, perhaps specified by genre, date, theme, author, and other classifications. Which particular texts are studied is determined in part by experts, in part by those who purvey textbooks, and in part by teachers and curriculum planners. There are three other broad areas of literature content: 1.historical and background information concerning authors, texts, and the times in which they were written or that form their subject matter; 2. information concerning critical terminology, critical strategies, and literary theory; and 3. information of a broad cultural nature such as that emerging from folklore and mythology which forms a necessary starting point for the reading of many literary texts. This perspective on the domain has been criticized as focusing too much on things external to the text; at the same time many have argued that such

knowledge is crucial to the acts of reading and writing. In the world of testing, there are a few current commercial tests that concentrate on this sort of knowledge (usually at the college level), it also formed the basis of the 1987 National Assessment of cultural knowledge (Finn & Ravitch, 1987; Applebee, Langer, & Mullis, 1987).

There is yet another group, a growing and vocal minority that sees the domain of literature learning as the development of a different kind of reading from that used with other texts (see Langer, 1989, for example). This kind of reading is called "aesthetic" and is opposed to the reading that one does with informational texts. Recent literary theory has come to view literature less in terms of the writer and more in terms of the reader, for it appears to be the reader, particularly the informed and trained reader, who defines a text as literary and reads it not for the information but for the experience of the nuances of the text itself. Such a definition follows from the strand of thinking that developed from I. A. Richards' Practical Criticism (1929), where the idea that the reader helped form the meaning of the text was given cogent voice. The position is best summarized by Louise Rosenblatt in The Reader, The Text, The Poem (1977) where she argues that literary texts are grounded in the real world of writers who may intend them to be seen poetically or not. Once written, texts become alive only when they are read, and they become literary when readers choose to read them as aesthetic objects rather than as documents. These readers bring a great deal of background knowledge concerning the substance, structure, and style of texts in order to ascertain the meaning and significance of the text. The meaning is that which can be verified by other readers of the text and by recourse to the historical grounding of the text, if such is available. The significance is personal or perhaps communal.

Thus a major function of literature education is the development of what one might call preferences or habits of mind in reading and writing. One must learn to read aesthetically and to switch lenses when one moves from social studies to poetry. In addition, literature education is supposed to develop something called "taste" or the love of "good literature," so that literature education goes beyond reading and writing in the inculcation of specific sets of preferred habits of

reading and writing about that particular body of texts which is called literature.

A Synthetic View of the Domain of Literature Learning. Many see these views of the teaching of literature to be in conflict, but for many teachers they can be held in balance. Rather than being forced to choose among the three views, I would argue that the domain of school literature can be divided into three interrelated aspects: knowledge, practice, and habit. The interrelationships are complex in that one uses knowledge in the various acts that constitute the practice and habits, and that the practices and habits can have their influence on knowledge. At the same time one can separate them for the purposes of curriculum planning and, as we shall see, testing. I would schematize the three sub-domains as indicated in Figure 1.

Figure 1

SCHOOL LITERATURE

KNOWLEDGE		PRACTICE		PREFERRED HABITS	
TEXTUAL	EXTRA-TEXTUAL	Responding	Articulating	Aesthetic Habits	Choice
Specific Text	History	Decoding	Retelling	Evaluating	Reading
Cultural Allusion	Author	Envisioning	Criticizing single works	Selecting	Criticizing
	Genres	Analyzing	Valuing		
	Styles	Personalizing	Generalizing across works		
	Critical	Interpreting			
	Terms				

Cultural knowledge can be contained in texts like myths and folk tales or it can exist outside of texts. "Responding" covers reading, watching, listening. It includes decoding or

making out the plain sense of the text or film, envisioning or coming to some whole impression and recreation of what is read, and the more detailed aspects of analyzing, personalizing, and interpreting. Often people envision without analyzing or interpreting.

"Articulating" also covers a wide variety of ways by which students let people know what their response is. This is the key to the curriculum in many ways. It is not just reading in a closet but bringing an envisionment of what is read out into the open. Like any school subject, literature involves public acts in which the student must articulate procedures and strategies as well as conclusions more than she might need to outside of school. Proofs are not necessary in mathematical applications outside of school; essays about one's reading of a text are not required after reading every library book.

In order to preserve the aesthetic nature of the text, and treat a work of literature like Moby Dick as a novel and not as a treatise on whales, the curriculum should seek to inculcate a set of habits. If literary works are not read and talked about as other kinds of texts are read but are to be read differently, students must learn how to perform this kind of reading and they must be encouraged to read this way voluntarily. The curriculum then must seek to promote habits of mind in reading and writing. One of these habits is to make aesthetic judgments about the various texts read and to justify these judgments publicly. Personal preference is not sufficient to the curriculum; one must learn to be a critic in the sense of a judge. In some cases it is desirable that specific criteria be used, usually formal or thematic criteria rather than personal ones. In developing and articulating these criteria, students are to be encouraged to recognize that others might be equally valid.

Since literature education is supposed to develop something called "taste" or the love of "good literature," the curriculum looks beyond reading and writing to the formation of specific sets of preferences and habits of reading and writing. It may include the development of a tolerance for the variety of literature, of a willingness to acknowledge that many different kinds and styles of work can be thought of as literature, and an acceptance that just because we do

not like a certain poem, does not mean that it is not good. The development of such habits of mind should lead students to the acceptance of cultural diversity in literature, and, by, extension, in society.

The curriculum can also lead students to developing taste based on an awareness of the meretricious or the shoddy use of sentiment or language. Experienced readers of literature can see that they are being tricked by a book or a film even when the trickery is going on--and they can enjoy the experience. Like advertising and propaganda, literature manipulates the reader or viewer. The conscious student can be aware of such manipulation and value the craft at the same time as discerning the motives that lie behind it.

These habits and preferences are culture specific. A dramatic example of the clash of cultural values has occurred over Salman Rushdie's Satanic Verses. It is clear that the literary and aesthetic habits of mind in most of the West are not shared by some in the Islamic world. It is also clear that many writers such as Wole Soyinka were themselves torn when they defended Rushdie on Western terms only to find themselves the targets of a group viewing literature in other terms. This issue writ large in a global scene also divides the citizens of the United States, as the many censorship cases that have arisen in this country have attested.

To those who would argue that I am setting forth a view of the curriculum that is not covered in their syllabus or philosophy, I would argue that however they view their literature program, what they teach and how they teach it will impact--positively or negatively--on students' knowledge or ignorance, their performance as readers and writers, and their habits and preferences. It is better to be conscious of the interaction of these three than to ignore any of them. You cannot have one without the other two.

Putting the pieces of the domain together rationally would suggest that if teachers want to measure their students' learning they will have to attend not only to issues of comprehension and writing about literary texts, but also to knowledge and to attitudes and judgments. This means asking students what they think and feel about what they have read and also asking

them whether they know something about literature as an art. Asking these questions might well alert students to our strong belief in the power of literature to move the mind and to affect our lives. We might also ask them how they value literature and the ideals concerning literature which the society professes to hold under the First Amendment. When we ask these questions as well as more "cognitive" ones, we find that we can better see the effects of our teaching. One study (Ho, 1988) has shown that there is little difference in the "cognitive" outcome of a traditional critical program and a response-centered one; the difference lies in the positive effect the latter has on habits, attitudes, and beliefs.

How Can We Talk about Difficulty and Growth? Having established something of the nature of the domain of literature learning, we must confront a second question. What do we know about growth and development? In the knowledge segment of the domain it is easy to talk about knowing more names and facts as being "better" than knowing fewer. The problem is we don't have a clear consensus on the body of important bits of information. Many would argue that the advocates of cultural literacy have too narrow a conception of the necessary knowledge. That issue would form the topic of a whole volume.

We seem to have greater consensus as to what constitutes growth in habits and preferences. Our values about literature are fairly widely held within the profession, even if they are not shared by many of those outside of it. We prefer our students reading classics to trash, we don't want them to be book-burners, we want them to be tolerant of the opinions of others, and we want them to be consumers of the literary culture if not creators of it.

The Question of Difficulty. That leaves the area of practice. How do we want our students to grow and expand? One answer is that we want them to be able to read increasingly difficult works with understanding. But just what does that innocent sentence mean? At the Literature Center, we asked a group of experts to help delimit the notion of difficulty in literature (Purves, 1991). Some were critics, some were linguists, some were classroom researchers. One result of this work is the determination that there are few objective criteria by which we can say

that Heart of Darkness is more difficult than The Pearl. This situation arises because we want students not only to read the text but to articulate their understanding of it. The reading and the articulation work hand-in-hand. The consensus of our experts, I would maintain, was that the standards for learning in literature are those of the community into which a given individual is entering. The community has determined that the level of discourse about Conrad's novel should be qualitatively different from that about Steinbeck's.

It is not simply enough for a high school senior to read a poem like "Nikki-Roosa" by Nikki Giovanni and say, "Gee, I like it" (although that might be all right for a seventh grader). The senior should be able to say something about the theme and its relation to the Black experience and about the structure and use of language. In an honors class, that senior might be expected to say something about the switch in point-of-view and whether it is a real or apparent switch. In college, as an English major, the student might be expected to add something about the historical context of the poem.

Given this idea of differing expectations, we conclude that the nature of difficulty is resolved as being a combination of the complexity and detail of 1) the requisite knowledge to be a member of the community, 2) the use of that knowledge in responding and articulating, and 3) the use of that knowledge in the making of appropriate aesthetic judgments and distinctions between personal and communal standards in the exercise of preferences and habitual behaviors with respect to texts. Such a definition also allows for works to be difficult not based on some intrinsic characteristics, but in terms of their community. Shakespeare may be harder or easier depending upon the nature of the community and its standards concerning knowledge, practice, and preferred habits and upon the intellectual distance an individual must travel to enter that community.

This view suggests the importance of literature learning as related to the idea of community. The literature curriculum appears to have the function of bringing the individual into the community. That is to say it provides the student with the requisite knowledge of the

communal canon as well as with the ways of reading that preserve the appropriate view of the functions of texts in the community. Another kind of learning that might eventuate from the study of literature would be the acquisition of a communal set of values concerning literature and perhaps arising from the content of the literature read. This has long been the thought of those who create literature programs in the schools as well as those who write. Shelley claimed poets were the unacknowledged legislators of mankind. Emerson sought to create an American literature that would solidify American values. The community has decided what is literature and what literature should be for the reader. The students learn to acquiesce and accept these values as they become loyal to the community.

The difficulty of a text (D), then, varies with the amount of knowledge (K) presumed by the community sufficient for an individual to demonstrate an adequate (A) and appropriate (A^1) articulation of a response to that text:

$$D = K\ (A + A^1)$$

Thus no text is easy or difficult outside of the norms and standards of the community that determines 1) what is necessary and sufficient knowledge; 2) what is an adequately framed discussion of that text or generalization about the text within a larger discussion of literature; and 3) what is an appropriate aesthetic
disposition towards the text.

Towards A Domain-Referenced Assessment of Literature Learning

In order to make a comprehensive assessment of literature learning, then, a classroom testing program needs to cover the whole of the domain--or at least sample from it. There should be some measure of the knowledge that teachers expect the students to have acquired. This means that teachers must decide what is the important knowledge. Is it names and dates? Is it themes, movements, and ideas? Is it critical terms and critical procedures?

The teacher must also set the terms for defining the difficulty of the texts they ask

students to read and write about. Is the difficulty to be one of the obscurity of the text or its remoteness from the lives of the students? Is it to be in terms of the subtlety of the emotions or the complexity of the metaphors? On another level is the difficulty to be in what the student is to say about the text? Certainly it is hard to read an unfamiliar text and immediately answer some brief questions about it; how much harder is the task when the student is asked to compose a formal essay judged on content, organization, and style? Should a teacher ask students what general principles about literature they have derived?

The teacher must also determine what attitudes, interests and habits to measure. Should one ask about the students' taste? or the premises underlying that taste? Should the teacher find out if the students have become more intense readers making deeper connections with their reading? Should the students be measured for their interests in reading and viewing, for their beliefs about the role of literature in society? All of these are questions that need to be asked in framing a comprehensive assessment program for literature learning.

Specifications for a Pilot Test. The Center has been conducting a series of pilot tests of this model of assessment to come up with a program that might be used by a school--or a state for that matter (Purves, Li, & Shirk, 1990; Li, Purves, & Shirk, 1991). The principle behind the testing is that knowledge, practice, and preference are related but not highly interrelated aspects of the construct of literature learning. A comprehensive measure of student performance, therefore, should address each of the three areas. From the pilot tests we found that within the knowledge domain, textual knowledge and knowledge of critical terms are distinct, particularly in their relationship to the practice of reading and responding. Within the domain of practice, more than one passage is needed to get some estimate of a student's performance across text-types. It seems to make little difference whether one uses open-ended or multiple-choice questions, but one can argue on other grounds that open-ended questions probably present somewhat more of a challenge to students than multiple-choice questions (Hansson, 1990), and would therefore be a more exacting measure of the ability to read and

shape a response to what is read.

It is also clear that an extended response is also desirable, but the phrasing of the question might be such as to allow the student some preparation for the setting forth of a fully articulated composition. A stark question is less desirable than a question that builds upon another sort of task, one that gets the student to consider the text in question (Hansson, 1990). A combination of multiple-choice and essay or scale and essay might be the optimum measures.

In the realm of preference, it would appear important to separate determining the student's criteria for judging a text from the actual judgment. It would also appear to be important to get a depiction of general attitudes towards literature including censorship, since these clearly appear to be related to cognitive performance (whether in an antecedent or consequent role remains unclear).

From these conclusions we derived a set of specifications for an assessment of student learning in literature that would include the following:

1. Measures of background knowledge, terminology and cultural information; these may include matching and supplying or generating items.

2. Measures of the ability to read and to articulate a written response to at least two texts that differ in genre, the measures to include both supplying and constructing items, with the latter taking the form of extended discourse.

3. Measures of preference including aesthetic judgment of specific texts and general habits and beliefs concerning literature and its place in the world.

Such an assessment provides a more comprehensive picture of student learning and also of program effectiveness than would a measure of any one taken alone. A recent study showed that a complex measure served best to validate a model of instruction. If the intention of the instruction is to make classroom exploration of literature more open and to use more "real" and thought-provoking questioning than normal instruction, its validation must include measures of both practice and preference (Ho, 1988).

Field Studies of the Test Program. In the most recent phase of the work of the Center,

we gave a comprehensive test to nearly a thousand students in New York, California, and Wisconsin (Li, Purves, & Shirk, 1991). This exercise in creating a domain-referenced evaluation of literature learning at the secondary school level brought with it some conclusions both about testing and about literature learning. Concerning the domain of literature, the test results indicated that the three sub-domains of knowledge, practice, and habits or preferences are distinct yet related. They do tend to interpenetrate each other to some extent. The domain construction appears to be empirically validated. Knowledge affects practice but is not a substitute for it; the same can be said for interests and qualities of reading. Within the field of practice, there seems to be a distinction between demonstrating one's understanding of a text and articulating a sustained response to a text. Reading and writing indeed are related, but they are not equivalent.

From this theoretical perspective we might postulate some characteristics of the good literature student, at least in the United States. Giving the test can help find out whether such a student exists. A good literature student is clever, articulate, knowledgeable, and committed to literature and the literary experience. Such a student can read a text and answer specific questions concerning its content, structure, and form; such a student can write an extended response to a text; such a student knows something of the cultural matrix of literature and of the nature of the language used in discussing literature. And such a student is a reader who becomes involved in the text, who likes to read, and who respects literature enough to be chary of the censor's red pen.

When we examined the results of our testing, we found that few such students existed in the sample we tested. The students in our sample are more complex than this composite. Students who can answer the critical questions may not be the best writers of extended prose, nor can they write as well unless helped with some mediated response. These same "good readers" do possess background knowledge but they are not necessarily readers who get deeply involved in what they read nor are they particularly interested in reading literature. The

"total" literature student is a fiction rather than a reality. The students can compartmentalize themselves. This inference is supported by the comment from several of the students that they thought it inappropriate to ask for their beliefs and opinions in a test. To ask for cognitive performance is all right, they said, but not to ask what they think. Such an opinion is shaped by their perceptions of appropriate testing and, by extension, appropriate teaching.

A Conclusion and a Beginning

The tests that we have devised are imperfect measures as all tests are. The measures may be seen as inconsistent in that they ask the students at one point to match the examiner's understanding of the text and at others to encourage an openness of response possibilities. This inconsistency can be construed as a vice or a virtue, of course, but we would argue that it is an inconsistency within the curriculum that presently exists (Applebee, 1990). The students' comments suggest that they perceive that inconsistency.

In their totality these measures or a package of measures similar to it can help enable a school, a district, or a state to get some picture of what student achievement in literature looks like. Results from such an assessment package help form a portrait of the typical product of our schools. Although they could be used for student evaluation, we believe that their best use is to evaluate programs, to show the relationships between the intended literature curriculum and the achieved curriculum in a given school or classroom.

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Chapter 6

Rethinking Literature Instruction

Judith A. Langer

The need to reexamine the role of literature in the educational experience of young people is particularly acute at this time, when the nation as a whole is attempting to redefine its educational goals and objectives. Although the various reform movements have had many dimensions, one central theme has been the need to develop students' thinking abilities-- the complex ways of approaching issues that underlie disciplined and reasoned thought. However, too often educators have turned to generic problem solving approaches as the focus of reform, with identified "critical thinking" strategies applied in similar ways across the different academic subjects (see for example Swartz & Perkins, 1990).

In this chapter, I use the results of my Literature Center studies to propose a series of ways to think about literature and its teaching that will help us move beyond such notions, making distinctions among meaning-making strategies based upon the different purposes for which people read-- in this case when people read to engage in a literary experience or to gain information. My argument has three parts: 1) That literature is indeed a distinct way of knowing, with its own special orientation toward meaning; 2) That processes of understanding literature have distinct patterns that provide a way to think about the kinds of questions we ask and the support we provide; and, 3) That by modifying our approaches to instruction in particular ways, we can more effectively support the teaching and learning of literature.

For the past few years in my work at the Literature Center, I have been developing an underlying theory for the teaching of literature. As part of this work, I have been studying the nature of literary understanding and the ways in which it differs from approaches to understanding other coursework (see Langer 1989; 1990a), and have been using this information as a way to rethink

literature instruction (see Langer 1990b,; 1991; Roberts & Langer, 1991). Here, I will discuss literature and the process of literary understanding, and then the implications for instruction. I will elaborate my discussion with examples from my multi-year collaborative project involving 15 teachers from a variety of city and suburban schools (Langer, 1991).

What is Literary About Literature?

When contemplating educational reform, it is important that we think broadly, considering the unique contribution that English language arts instruction can make to students' intellectual development. Across the years, scholars have made distinctions between literary and scientific ways of thinking, suggesting that together they form the multiple sources of reason people draw upon when constructing meaning. In this tradition, Suzanne Langer (1967) speaks of subjective and objective realities, Louise Rosenblatt (1978) speaks of aesthetic and efferent readings, James Britton (1970) speaks of spectator and participant roles, and Jerome Bruner (1986) speaks of narrative and paradigmatic thought. Although developed for different purposes, each set of distinctions focuses on qualitative differences between experiences that have literary and informative purposes. Each conceives of two kinds of approaches to reasoning that are available within the human consciousness: on the one hand a situation where the language-user engages in a lived-through experience, and on the other hand a situation where the language-user holds meaning apart in quest of a more rational or logical understanding. One is more subjective, focusing inward on personal meanings, the other more objective, focusing outside of the individual's personal life-world. Each of these commentators views subjective experience (such as that involved in literary meaning-making) as a natural and necessary part of the well-developed intellect-- different from, but as valued as, objective experience.

Although the development of logical thought has tended to be the primary focus in school coursework, there is growing evidence that the processes involved in understanding literature are also productive and important in dealing with problems of everyday life and work. For example, a

growing body of studies indicates that doctors, physicians, lawyers, and computer repairers use both modes of thought to solve problems (e.g., Dworkin, 1983; Elstein, Shulman, & Sprafka, 1978; Orr, 1987a,b; Putnam, 1978). This work describes ways in which professionals who usually take a "logical" approach to problem solving productively turn to storytelling to help them work through difficult problems and develop possible solutions. However, while such work indicates the importance of storytelling as a means of problem-solving, the process of "storytelling" as a way of thinking has been largely unexplored, and the connection between such thinking and the goals and processes of literature instruction needs to be made more explicit.

Orientations toward understanding.

One body of Literature Center work (see Langer 1989, 1990a) helps explain some basic distinctions between readers' approaches toward meaning when they are reading in order to engage in a literary experience in contrast to when they are reading in order to gain information. Although both purposes can interplay during any one reading experience [e.g., living through the characters' experiences in a novel, yet learning about particular events in the Civil War] each reading tends to have a primary purpose [in this case to engage in a literary experience] with other goals being secondary. It is this primary purpose that guides readers' overall approaches to meaning-making, moving them toward one or another of two distinctly different orientations. In both cases the meanings they develop are guided by their sense of the whole-- a sense of what the piece is all about. However, it is also this sense of the overall whole that differs when reading for literary and informational purposes, causing readers to orient themselves in different ways because their expectations about the kinds of meanings to be derived when reading for one or the other purpose are different.

When readers engage in a literary experience, their orientations can be characterized as reaching toward a horizon of possibilities: they make sense of new parts of the text in terms of their sense of the whole, but they also use the new text to reconsider that whole as well. A literary

orientation is one of exploration-- where uncertainty is a normal part of response and new-found understandings provoke still other possibilities. Readers contemplate feelings, intentions and implications, using their knowledge of human possibility to go beyond the meanings imparted in the text and fill out their understandings. In this way, readers explore possibilities on two levels: in terms of their momentary understandings, and in terms of their changing sense of the unfolding whole.

In contrast, when the purpose of reading is primarily to gain information (as is generally the case when reading expository prose, for example), readers' orientation can be characterized as maintaining a point of reference. From early on readers attempt to establish a sense of what the topic is or the slant the author is taking toward it. Once done, this sense of the whole-- where the piece is going-- becomes a relatively steady reference point. Unlike the frequent reconsiderations of the possibilities of the whole that readers engage in during a literary reading, when reading for information, readers attempt to build upon, clarify, or modify their momentary understandings but rarely change their overall sense of the topic or point; their sense of the whole changes only when a substantial amount of countervailing information leads them to rethink their general sense of what the piece is about.

These notions provide us with ways to conceptualize the process of meaning development during the literary experience, and to recognize how it differs from the process of understanding when reading for other purposes. They also can help us rethink the role literature instruction might play in students' intellectual development: students need to learn to use literary approaches to create "poems" in Rosenblatt's (1978) sense, as well as to learn the approaches needed to gain information. As Bruner (1986) argues, we need to call on the strengths of both modes in academic study and in everyday life. The development of students' abilities to engage in literary understanding is a unique contribution that literature education can make.

However, we have ample evidence that across the United States, literature is too often

taught and tested in a non-literary manner. In a series of studies of the questions asked in anthologies as well as on a range of tests, Brody, DeMilo, and Purves (1989) report that literature is usually treated as content (a point of reference), with a particular right answer as the goal. Similarly, studies of classroom discussion indicate that literature tends to be taught in an informational manner (Applebee, 1989), as if there is a point to be gotten or a correct interpretation the reader must move toward. Schooling rarely asks students to share their own understandings of a text, nor does it help students learn to build richer ones through the exploration of possibilities.

Yet, the distinction between exploring possibilities and maintaining a point of reference has the potential to influence the ways in which literature education is perceived at a policy level-- in terms of its contribution to students' general intellectual development, and also has implications for instruction. On the one hand it suggests that business cannot go on as usual, with reform efforts in critical thinking treating literary instruction similarly to other coursework, and on the other it suggests the need for some shifts in goals and apparatus generally associated with literature instruction. For example, the kinds of questions asked of students will need to differ when reading is for literary as opposed to informative purposes, focusing on the possibilities students consider on the one hand and on the content they come away with on the other. The kinds of help given and evaluations made will also need to differ, with teachers, instructional materials, and tests validating different approaches toward meaning-making based upon purpose, as opposed to the unidimensional valuing of informational approaches that presently exists.

Thus, English educators-- teachers, policy makers, test developers, and publishers as well as researchers and teacher trainers-- have a job to do. We need to develop a better way of thinking about the process of literary understanding-- and a common language to talk about, support, value, and teach it.

What Does it Mean to Understand Literature?

Such changes will need to be guided by a view of meaning development as an act of

sense-making rather than fact-finding. (While the act of locating information is a necessary and often useful activity, the "search and lift out" behaviors needed to accomplish such tasks differ from those used to make overall sense of a piece of text.) Sense-making reading experiences involve a process of meaning-change, where understandings flex and grow over time. I use the word envisionment (see Fillmore, 1981; Langer 1985, 1986, 1987b, 1989, 1990a,b) to refer to the understanding a reader has about a text at a particular point in time; what the reader understands, the questions that develop, as well as the hunches that arise about how the piece might unfold. A reader's envisionment (or text world) changes throughout the reading of a particular piece-- it changes because as reading continues some information is no longer seen as important, some is added to the reader's consciousness, and some earlier interpretations are changed. What readers come away with at the end of a reading is a final envisionment. This includes what they understand, what they don't, and the questions they still have. Therefore, the final envisionment is also subject to change, with further time and thought.

Although this constructivist view of reading has become fairly well accepted in the research literature (see for example Goodman, 1970; Iser, 1978; Rumelhart, 1975; Spiro, Bruce, & Brewer, 1980; Suleiman & Crosman, 1980), its implications for instruction have barely been considered, although they can have considerable impact on the questions we ask students as well as what is considered "acceptable understanding." If we believe that understanding changes as readers move through a text, then we must also accept that what students come away with at the end of a reading are not the bits of information that appeared in the text, but their final envisionments-- the text-worlds they have constructed (see Langer 1986,1987a,b). If we wish to discuss students' understandings of the text, we need to ask questions that tap these final envisionments; although we don't want to end there, it is the most meaningful place to begin.

How Do These Envisionments Develop?

During reading, there are a series of stances or relationships the reader takes toward the

text, each adding a somewhat different dimension to the reader's growing understanding of the piece. (See Langer 1989, 1990a, for a discussion of the Literature Center studies on which these descriptions of stances are based.) These stances are recursive rather than linear (they have the potential to recur at any point in the reading) and are a function of varying reader/text relationships. They are:

* Being Out and Stepping Into an Envisionment - In this stance, readers attempt to make contacts with the world of the text by using prior knowledge, experiences, and surface features of the text to identify essential elements (e.g., genre, content, structure, language) in order to begin to construct an envisionment.

* Being In and Moving Through an Envisionment - In this stance, readers are immersed in their understandings, using their previously-constructed envisionment, prior knowledge, and the text itself to further their creation of meaning. As they read more, meaning-making moves along with the text; readers are caught up in the narrative of a story or are carried along by the argument of an informative text.

* Stepping Back and Rethinking What One Knows - In this stance, readers use their envisionments of the text to reflect on their own previous knowledge or understandings. Rather than prior knowledge informing their envisionments as in the other stances, in this case readers use their envisionments of the text to rethink their prior knowledge.

* Stepping Out and Objectifying the Experience - In this stance, readers distance themselves from their envisionments, reflecting on and reacting to the content, to the text, or to the reading experience itself.

Over time, understanding grows from meanings readers derive from the various stances they take along the way -- getting acquainted, using meaning to build meaning, associating and reflecting, and distancing. Through these shifting relationships between self and text, readers structure their own understandings.

Thus, the notion of stances has the potential to help us understand where and what kind of support to provide in helping students move through the process of coming to understand literature. It suggests the kinds of instruction that will support readers in developing their understandings--where instruction can focus on the reader's process of thinking through the content. In doing so it also raises questions about the efficacy of some instructional procedures widely used in English classes. For example, questions that focus on the concerns readers have as they move through the stances use the students' processes as the starting place in opening discussions, asking questions, offering assistance, and making assignments. From this vantage point, comprehension cannot be conceptualized as either literal or inferential, since these distinctions are text based and assume that information presented at different points in the text combines without the visions of possibilities engaged in by the reader. Such distinctions simply don't reflect real processes of reading and understanding, where stances shift and horizons evolve as envisionments build (Langer, 1985, 1987b).

The stances can also help us understand the particular difficulties that some readers face in their reading. For example, poor readers often spend much more time in the "being out and stepping into an envisionment" stance (see Langer, 1991; Purcell-Gates, in press). Although they enter the other stances at least some of the time, their problem seems to lie more with their ability to develop a depth of understanding-- a sufficiently rich envisionment in <u>any</u> of the stances to sustain and build upon it. Instead, unexpected events, unfamiliar formats, or new language can cause them to lose their present envisionment, sending them back into the first stance, once again

in search for an array of initial information familiar enough to allow them to "step in" again.

Even good readers face similar problems when they are confronted with more difficult texts. At any point where the language or ideas they are reading about are sufficiently discordant with their envisionments, readers might return to a "being out and stepping in" stance in order to gather enough basic knowledge to permit them to continue their move through the piece. In such cases, either their envisionments are too sparse to offer clues, or they do not adequately search their envisionments for clues.

Posing questions that ask students to share and discuss their envisionments can support them through a difficult part of the piece yet still leave them room to continue to build envisionments on their own. Asking questions that help students explore their envisionments, that guide the students to explore possible meanings beyond those they already have considered within a particular stance, has the potential to help them learn ways in which they can enrich their envisionments on their own. Questions that focus primarily on stepping out and going beyond, the kinds of questions that ask students to trace the plot line, analyze characters and events, or focus on the language, organization, or literary elements in the piece (the kinds of questions often asked in English classes), are likely to be helpful only later in the process.

What Might Such an Instructional Context Look Like?

For the past few years, I have been studying what these notions of envisionments, stances, and orientations mean for the teaching of literature (see Langer 1987b; 1990a; 1991; Roberts & Langer, 1991), identifying ways in which classrooms can become environments that encourage students to arrive at their own understandings, explore possibilities, and move beyond their initial understandings toward more thoughtful interpretations. From this work, I have distilled some general principles of instruction that permeate classrooms that encourage students to think.

Students as Thinkers.

Students are treated as thinkers, as if they can and do have interesting and cogent thoughts about the pieces they read, and also have questions they would like to discuss. Teachers provide students with ownership for the topics of discussion, making students' understandings the central focus of each class meeting.

The following are examples of questions teachers use to begin a lesson, indicating that they are interested in students' responses rather than predetermined "right" interpretations.

T. How did you feel at the end of the story?

T. What was on your mind?

T. What did it mean to you?

T. Anything you want to talk about?

T. Caly, why don't you start us off.

Prompted in this way, these class discussions begin with the students' envisionments, permitting them to voice their initial impressions, to raise questions, to introduce possibilities, to hear others, and to think beyond.

After the lesson is underway, there are continuing invitations for students to think about and contribute to the ongoing discussion. For example:

T. Would someone like to comment on that point?

T. O.K. Anybody want to add to what Sido...

T. ...And Iris, you said?

Group work also provides students with opportunities to explore their understandings. Sometimes these discussions focus on topics the teacher has set, but most often these work best when students are encouraged to discuss their initial impressions, raise questions, review predictions or responses they have written in their journals, or to raise an issue they think is

interesting for the group to consider. Such discussions provide a forum for students to explore their own ideas, and to help each other move beyond their initial impressions. As one student put it,

> When we have our discussions, we learn a lot from each other. We can really give each other ideas. It's not just one person's ideas, it's all of them together.

Written assignments such as logs, briefwrites, informal letters, and written conversations in addition to more formal reviews, essays, and analytic papers also encourage students to reflect on, state, defend, and rethink their responses. Students can be encouraged to keep literature journals and also to use them on a regular basis during class discussions, small group meetings, and when they write alone or with someone else. Among other things, students can be asked to jot down any questions they have; to make predictions about how they think characters feel, what might happen next, or how the piece might turn out; to note their ideas about the piece up to that point in their reading; to jot what they do or don't like or agree with, and why; or to make notes about anything else they have read or seen that they were reminded of when reading this piece. They can also be encouraged to use their journals as discussion starters. For example, one middle grade remedial reading teacher had her students reread a poem they had read as a homework assignment, and then, jot down any ideas you have about the poem....and what it means to you." The students' comments became the focus of discussion, beginning with the teacher's initial question, "So what does it mean to you?"

In each case, the continual focus on students' developing understandings-- exploring them, talking about them, and refining them-- offers ways in which students are encouraged to realize that acceptable behavior in this class involves thinking about the piece being read, focusing on developing ideas, and sharing responses with classmates.

Literature Reading as Question Generating.

Teachers who support literary understanding assume that after completing a piece, readers come away with questions as well as understandings, and that responding to literature involves the raising of questions. Thus, teachers continually invite students' questions, in many contexts. For example, they invite students' questions at the very beginning of a new work:

T. Look at the title and the picture. Any questions come to mind?

They also use homework as an opportunity for students to become aware of their questions. For example:

T. Read the next chapter. Come in with a question for us to discuss.

They also invite questions during class discussion. For example:

T. Is there anything more you'd like to talk about regarding these chapters?

T. Do you have any questions about what is so great about Gatsby....I know Brig isn't the only one that has that question.

T. Do you have any problems with what's happening?

T. Any questions?

In more traditional classrooms, having questions signifies that a student doesn't know (the "right" answer) and therefore question-asking is often avoided by students. However, in the contexts of classrooms that support literary understanding, it is considered a desirable behavior, indicating that students who are pondering uncertainties and ambiguities and explore possibilities are behaving as good readers of literature.

Student Knowledge Taps.

In lessons where students are involved in literary thinking, teachers' questions tap students' knowledge, not the teacher's expected response. Such questions are concerned with what the student understands or is concerned about. Student knowledge taps are questions that have no right answers and prompt extended language and thought. Examples follow:

T. What do you think is happening to his life?

T. Ron, how is she more mature?

T. What are you making of the book so far?

T. Could you continue just a little bit more? Can anyone add to this, expand on this?

Class Meetings as Time to Develop Understandings.

When students engage in literary thinking, the relationships they take towards the text recapitulate the stances and orientations toward meaning that characterize the process of literary understanding during reading. Thus, their recursive movements through the stances and exploration of possibilities lead them to a final envisionment after reading that can then become the starting place for exploring further understandings during the class discussion. The following segment a few minutes into the class discussion illustrates this:

Sheila: I didn't like the ending either. Because it just seemed like towards the ending, I mean, at the beginning of the book Lisa wasn't the only person with ideas. But towards the ending, the kids seemed to be like really dumb. And they were just, "We need Lisa, we can't survive without her." And I just, this is like another topic, sort of, but it goes into this, it all seems like that isn't very realistic at all. I mean, I don't see how one person can be smart and have all these ideas, and the rest of them be like frogs.

T. So, you're very unhappy with the idea that there's just one person who seems to be able to pick up the leadership and go, and that's not, to use the word, realistic....Kent?

Kent: I disagree with her, her, her, and her. (Pointing)

T: What?

Kent: Because she says everything wasn't so peachy dandy....

Charlene: What about all the other gangs, and the food?

Kent: The Chicago gang, who cares about them?

Charlene: What about the other gangs in the city where they used to live? I mean, Tom Logan wasn't the only gang.

T: One at a time.

Gep: After they demolished Tom Logan's gang, a lot of other gangs did not want to mess with them.

Charlene: But what happens if the other gangs join up? You know that is possible.

T. O.K. Let's go here with Betsy.

Betsy: I sort of agree with Sheila, because the end is like, unreal, okay? Unreal....

In this instance, a 7th grade class was discussing their reading of Girl Who Owned a City by O.T. Nelson. Sheila makes a stance 4 (stepping out and objectifying the experience) statement, judging the piece and explaining why. Kent makes a 4th stance response to something Charlene had said earlier, and then shifts to a 4th stance focus on his view of the ending. Charlene, assuming the 2nd stance (being in and moving through an envisionment), reworks her understanding as she explains it to Kent in her next two turns. Gep continues to work through Charlene's contention that the ending wasn't "peachy," and Charlene adds more for them to think about. Betsy, convinced for the present of the unhappy ending interpretation being developed by Sheila, Charlene, and Gep, does not rework the ideas as they have done, but objectifies the piece by stating her judgment of the ending. Thus, in this section, the students have entered the 4th stance in making judgments about

the piece, and have used the 2nd stance to explain and rethink their understandings that underlie these judgments. In addition, the students almost always adopt a literary orientation as they reach toward a horizon of possibilities. For example, Sheila does this with the implicit question "Why did the kids change from having ideas at the beginning of the book to being dumb at the end?" Charlene is explicit as she twice raises the problem of the other gangs, while Gep implicitly opens exploration of the gang's relationship with other gangs. In this way, class discussion serves as a time when the students individually and collectively participate in reworking their interpretations, raising questions, exploring possibilities, and getting deeper into the piece by moving in and out of the four stances.

Instruction as Scaffolding the Process of Understanding.

The roles of the teacher and of the students, change dramatically in such classrooms, taking the form of a collaborative interaction where the teacher encourages the students to work through their understandings on their own, but also helps them in appropriate ways when this is necessary, accelerating or reducing the complexity of the task in response to what the students are trying to accomplish. In such situations, teachers do not serve as the sole holders of knowledge, and provide almost no evaluating or correcting during class discussion. Instead, they help the students find more appropriate ways to think about and discuss what they read.

Scaffolding Ways to Discuss

Teachers help students learn how to engage in a literary discussion by letting them know what is appropriate to talk about in a literature discussion in their classes (e.g., about students' understandings and questions as opposed to what they think the teacher thinks is "right"). This is done by:

a. Tapping the Students' Understandings - Teachers indicate that students' understandings are the central concern of the discussion by asking questions that invite the students to express their ideas and questions. For example, a middle school (urban) class read the poem "The Duel" by Emily Dickenson together two times. Then their teacher asked them to read it once again to themselves, and to take five minutes to write their responses in their literature journals. Then they discussed their responses with a partner for about 7 minutes. After the pair were finished, they turned their desks in toward the center of the room in a loose circle facing each other, with the teacher seated in the circle as well. Then the discussion began:

T: Let's hear your thoughts. Talk to each other about what you have come up with.

Tish: I heard you (looking at Lenny) talking and I heard you had a question. What was your question?

Lenny: I asked about, "I aimed my pebble, but myself" because I didn't understand it.

Tish: He tried to shoot Goliath.

Lenny: No, Up at line 5, "but himself."

Tish: He only fell.

Lenny: (asking Desmond) What have you got?

Desmond: The bully was losing the fight with....

b. Seeking Clarification - Teachers indicate that clarity of thought is important in class discussions of literature by asking for clarification or restatements when the students' comments are muddy. This can be done in a number of ways, for example:

T: Could you continue just a little bit more, so I get your idea?

T: Brought out in the open. What is it that we see in the open?

T: Alright, now we have a different interpretation here. Are you saying, even though he

didn't do it he would have liked to have done it?

T: O.K., so you think it's made up in his mind?

T: Maybe you need to describe it for more people to understand.

c. Inviting Participation - Teachers help students learn to "enter" and take their turn in a literature discussion by showing them when and what to say. For example:

T: Michael, what do you think?

T: What do you think of what Rhonda said?

T: How do you think he's trying to do that?

T: How does he do that, Silvie?

d. Orchestrating the Discussion - Teachers show students how to "converse"-- how to connect ideas, how to agree, disagree, and extend the ideas being discussed by the group, and how to signal this in conversation. Some examples are:

T: Mark, say it so everybody can hear it.

T: Let her finish.

T. But Rick's point is, listen to Rick's point. He's saying it doesn't matter.

T: Raquelle, do you agree with what Tony is saying?

T: ...But I think if you listen to each oth[illegible]here are a lot of different ways to see what's going on. So, we don't have to take the first answer and say that's it.

Scaffolding Ways to Think

Teachers also help students learn how to think about the content. They do this by indicating alternative (and often more sophisticated) ways to think about the ideas being discussed.

a. Focusing - Teachers help students narrow in on the particular concern they wish to discuss instead of moving into a more general commentary that leaves the listener (or reader) uncertain about the student's actual concern. One example of a teacher's request for clarification during a discussion of The Great Gatsby follows:

> Harry: What's so great about Gatsby? That's what I want to know.
>
> T: Do you have any guesses?...
>
> Rhonda: ....its like because he's throwing all these parties and he's making himself so popular, and its more or less so far. It's like he's the one who's making himself pretty. Nobody has really, you know, said he's great because you, its just more or less him throwing these great parties and doing all different kinds of things...All his money, nothing to write about (mumble). I'm sure people admire that.
>
> T: Are you saying that that's what may be great about him?
>
> Rhonda: Well, I don't think there's enough information on him....

b. Shaping - Teachers help students tighten their presentation, as in the following example:

> T: Bob, you said something that was really interesting about Gatsby and trying, he is great because why again?
>
> Bob: Because like he was in the war, he kept trying to get himself killed but it always turned out he did something, you know, beneficial. And got rewarded for it.
>
> T: You said something about his ego?

c. Linking - Teachers also show their students how to use information from other parts of the reading, the discussion, or related experiences to enrich their own developing interpretations or to gain new insights. In the following example, Cora's teacher helps her pay attention to what other students have already said in the discussion:

> Stella: Maybe he's thinking of something that happened to them in the past. I still think he has a big ego, but maybe he feels really nervous about being around Daisy. Not just any woman, just Daisy.
>
> T: What do you think of what Rhonda said?...
>
> Stella: It still doesn't matter. If you have a big ego, it doesn't matter. He'll think well that was before, now look at me now (mumble), that was a long time ago. If he had such a big ego, it wouldn't matter. It's like, he would just care about himself. For some reason he cares about her very much and is really worried about what she thinks.

d. Upping the Ante - Teachers also help students move beyond their already established ways of approaching concerns by providing them with new and sometimes less obvious ways to think about the issues. For example, after the class had explored many of their reasons for not liking the end of the poem "Sing for My Father, Who Stressed the Bunt" because it seemed simplistic to them, this teacher provided them with a new vantage point from which to consider this:

> Ross: Well, why he was on these teams and he didn't know about, he knew about hunting, but he always wanted, like Brendan was saying, to be in the limelight. He never like really spared his life to get out....He always wanted to be the one to go all the way around.
>
> T: ...Let me ask this question to see if it helps....Is there a passage of time?
>
> Ross: ...Alright, there's different leagues, and you start off like....like there's minors, start with pee wees....It's different age groups.

Brendan: Like six years he's probably talkin' about going from minors to majors.

In each of these cases, teachers provide students with new ways to talk about and think about the literature they are reading for class, helping them become active participants in thoughtful literature lessons.

Transfer of Control from Teacher to Student.

To help their students become independent thinkers and learners teachers encourage them to take on roles for themselves that their teacher has previously assumed. In this way, students come to understand and internalize the ways of talking about and thinking about literature that have already been demonstrated for them. One remedial student who had provided a particularly thoughtful analysis during a small group discussion was asked by his teacher how he knew what were the most important issues to think about and discuss; he said, "I knew what you would ask me [even though you weren't there]." Thus, in a Vygotskian sense, learning how to think and reason about literature moved from the interpsychological plane (the socially based interactions where ways to think about literature were modeled by the teacher) to the intrapsychological plane (where the individuals internalized the underlying rules their teachers had previously demonstrated for them).

Further, small group discussions serve as an interim social environment, where students have an opportunity to take over the teacher's role as they interact with each other. During these small group work sessions, they are encouraged to treat each other as thinkers, following the patterns of thought and interaction that have been previously demonstrated by their teacher. During these small group meetings the teacher often visits each group, taking the role of participant observer -- asking pertinent questions and providing models of how to structure thought in ways the students are not yet doing.

Thus, in response to instructional support the teacher provides in the whole class sessions and the support provided when they are trying to assume these behaviors on their own, students come

to engage in authentic discussions about literature; they agree and disagree with each other, challenge each other, and defend their views. In the following example of a student discussion, we can see how they help focus, shape, and link what others have said, as well as seek each others' opinions and challenge each other to rethink.

S. I want to ask the others if they thought Lisa was city bound.

S. What about the rest of you. Would you do as she did?

S. I'm agreeing with those kids, but when things were going well...

S. Show me why you think so. Where did you get it from?

S. I disagree with her and her and her and him, but I agree with Tom because...

S. What about all the other gangs, and the food?

S. I felt that in the third part it was a little different...

In general, then, when these principles characterize the instructional environment, students are supported to become socialized to engage in the process of literary understanding, exploring, rethinking, explaining, and defending their own understandings. The social structure of such classrooms calls for (and expects) the thoughtful participation of all students, and provides them with the environment in which they can see, learn, and practice these expected behaviors.

Conclusion

Here, I have discussed characteristics of literary understanding and characteristics of English language arts classrooms that support such understanding. The three-part focus (on literature as a distinct way of knowing with its own special orientation toward meaning; on the processes of understanding literature and the patterns they take; and on general principles of instruction that support the process of literary understanding) may prove useful as a framework for reflection and change. While my comments suggest ways to rethink the teaching and learning of literature, they do not propose a wholesale abandonment of what is already familiar. Changes already taking place in classrooms across the country have been motivated by similar concerns; researchers and

theorists have explored related issues; and the issues are as old as student-centered theory itself. However, a unified way of conceptualizing the goals of literature education and its processes of instruction still eludes us. By and large, the teaching of literature is "rudderless," espousing a focus on thinking and reasoning without a strong and stable conception of what this means in response to literature and without the contextual anchor that can be provided by a clear understanding of the relationships among the nature of literary understandings and the instructional contexts in which such understandings develop. The work of the Literature Center has provided forceful arguments for our need to rethink literature instruction as well as powerful suggestions for change. I hope that taken together, they move us to rethink the goals as well as practices of literature instruction, to focus on its unique role in students' intellectual development, on its central role in the development of students' critical and creative thinking abilities, and on the concomitant need for national as well as districtwide attention and support for new directions in literature education.

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Chapter 7

Teacher Research

C. H. Knoblauch
Lil Brannon

Introduction

In the simplest, indeed self-evident, terms, teacher research is educational inquiry that is carried out by teachers themselves rather than by educational researchers (typically from universities) for whom that inquiry, in a certain form, is a central professional activity. Teacher research looks in several directions for its goals and justifications. It shares with other forms of educational inquiry a concern for producing knowledge about the practices of teaching and learning--in this case a knowledge distinctively enhanced by the insiders' understanding of the classroom that teachers can provide. But it is also concerned with the special advantages that accrue to teachers who engage in that inquiry themselves instead of remaining content with traditional arrangements in which university scholars do research and pass its conclusions along to teachers, with or without recommendations about practice. Goswami and Stillman (1987) summarize the advantages for teachers in their Preface: --"Their teaching is transformed in important ways: they become theorists, articulating their intentions, testing their assumptions, and finding connections with practice"; --"Their perceptions of themselves as writers and teachers are transformed. They step up their use of resources; they form networks; and they become more active professionally"; --"They become rich resources who can provide the profession with information it simply doesn't have. They can observe closely, over long periods of time, with special insights and knowledge. Teachers know their classrooms and students in ways that outsiders can't"; --"They become critical, responsive readers and users of current research... and more authoritative in their assessment of curricula, methods, and materials"; --"They collaborate with their students to answer questions important to both, drawing on community resources in new and unexpected ways.... Working with teachers to

answer real questions provides students with intrinsic motivation for talking, reading, and writing and has the potential for helping them achieve mature language skills."

Teacher research, then, aims to compose new knowledge of educational life from the vantagepoints of its primary participants--teachers and students. It also aims to enfranchise teachers as authentic makers of that knowledge in order to enhance the quality of their participation in curricular planning, resource development, instructional change, and other areas of educational administration to which they have legitimate and beneficial contributions to make. Not least, it intends to improve the quality of teaching and learning by engaging teachers as well as students more intensively, more self-consciously, in the processes of inquiry and reflection that enable effective teaching and learning in the first place. The research texts that our project has developed over the past three years (published and available through the Center) realize these aims in conspicuous ways, adding to knowledge of what actually happens today in classrooms devoted to the study of literature and doing so from the insiders' perspective of teachers who engage in that work daily themselves, teachers who know what to look for and at, as well as how to evaluate what they see.

The Projects

The teacher-research projects at the Literature Center were planned and implemented by a group of high school English teachers from districts in and around Albany, New York, along with university-based colleagues and collaborators who were members of the Literature Center faculty. The teacher-researchers were all themselves experienced professionals, regarded by colleagues, supervisors, and principals as outstanding literature instructors in their own right. Each of them undertook to observe an instructional unit of another English teacher considered to be equally accomplished in presenting literature to high school students. A unit was defined as the study of a novel, a play, or a sequence of short stories or poems over a period of four to five days. The intent was to compose detailed, evocative characterizations of what particular and well-regarded high

school literature teachers actually do in their classrooms.

Each teacher-researcher chose a colleague whose experience and expertise were popularly thought to be exceptional. The researcher conducted taped interviews with the "master teacher," as well as with his or her students, gathered lesson plans, study guidelines, and assignments related to the instructional units to be observed, and made videotapes of the classes involved. Each researcher discussed and studied these materials with the teacher during the observation phase of the project and with the other researchers in the analysis phase. Throughout the study, the researchers also continually reviewed their evolving interpretations of materials with project coordinators. Finally, each wrote a narrative account of what she or he had seen and what its significance appeared to be, preparing the account through several drafts, until themes and details emerged that seemed to the members of the project team and to the master teacher to provide an authentic rendering of the classroom experience. Throughout the project, the university-based team members served as organizers, facilitators, and reactors; however, the research itself was carried out by teachers, with teachers.

Goals and Methods

The question directing the research was this: How do the best high school English teachers introduce, undertake, and guide the study of literature in their classrooms? Plainly, there are nettlesome prior questions lurking here: What does "best" mean? What are the criteria for excellence? Who gets to say so? What does "literature" entail? But the concern of the project was to find out what teachers who are <u>perceived</u> to be successful actually do, the ways in which they do it, and the explanations they may offer for their practices. The attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions that might underlie perceptions of excellence were not the immediate concern, although the portraits that finally emerged of good teachers in action certainly direct attention to what the normal criteria of successful literature instruction are thought to be at the present time. Nor was the theoretically vexed question of what constitutes literature an immediate issue, though the texts that

various teachers chose for their classrooms represent statements about what literature is thought to include in the context of high school curricula today.

The master teachers of the study were selected simply by appeal to local knowledge: The researchers, all veteran educators in the Albany area, asked themselves and others which local high school English teachers had the most established reputations in literature instruction according to colleagues, supervisors, and students. There was no a priori critique of these public perceptions; instead, taken at face value, they were regarded as reliable indicators of the current, commonsense understanding of what makes for quality of instruction. The literary text that formed the basis of class work in each instance was the choice of the teacher or program involved, reflecting, at least as far as the project was concerned, the normal, current sense of appropriate reading material for a particular grade in Albany-area communities.

The research question was restricted to focus primarily on how a successful teacher interacts with students in the context of discussion of a literary work during class. Hence, less attention was directed to activities such as reading aloud or lecturing on background information, for instance, except insofar as they set up and conditioned opportunities for class discussion. Nor was much attention paid to those portions of class time devoted to routine business matters, "visiting" before and after class, or disciplinary and other regulatory actions, except, once again, to the extent that they might affect the character of discussion.

Naturally, the question "What constitutes 'discussion'?" and the related question "When is 'discussion' going on?" were persistent concerns, by no means easily dispatched. Initially, the teacher-researchers were prone to conceive discussion in their own favorite terms, which for one meant little or no teacher involvement, for another involvement but not direction, for still another, lecture or controlled questioning interspersed with student responses. Eventually, members of the research group agreed that discussion was properly whatever a particular master teacher said it was within his or her own classroom.

Researchers and master teachers agreed in advance on the units of instruction that would be

observed. During preclass interviews, each researcher asked about the reasons for choosing particular texts, what the teacher hoped to accomplish on each class day, what she or he expected of the students, and what assignments would support in-class work. The researcher also asked about the teacher's views of literature, literary study, and teaching. Following these interviews, arrangements were made to videotape classes in which discussion would be a primary activity and to observe but not to videotape other classes in which lecture, reading aloud, or other business would predominate (during these sessions researchers took notes only). Interestingly, no classes featured more time spent on lecture than on discussing the text: student involvement of one kind or another was a consistent feature of the classrooms studied. After each class, another meeting enabled the teacher-researcher and master teacher to review portions of the videotape, go over written notes, and discuss perceptions (on both sides) of what had happened and why. The research group believed it was important to richness of perception that the master teachers have the fullest opportunity to react to the tapes, comment on their practices, explain them in any way that seemed valuable, and react to the impressions that the teacher-researcher had formed of class activities.

Since there was no intent to evaluate or critique instruction practices or to view them from some other stance of privileged objectivity, teachers felt free to be candid about what worked and what didn't. Since the researchers were high school teachers themselves, they were able to display the perceptual judgment tempered by generosity that frequently characterizes those who have "been there" and who understand the obligations but also the difficulties of classroom work. The teacher-researchers knew the master teachers as responsible professionals; the master teachers trusted the teacher-researchers to tell their stories honestly.

The teacher researchers and project coordinators spent considerable time exploring the epistemological and hermeneutic questions that surround practices of observing and writing about complex human settings. Everyone acknowledged the necessarily interpretive nature of classroom observation, the influence of the researcher's perspective, the impact of a camcorder's presence,

location, focus and movement on what is seen, the selectivity and slant of field notes, the necessary but simplifying reduction of experiential detail to judgments, characterizations, and conclusions-- in general the interrelationships between observer and object observed as it is finally constituted in the textual record of some experience. The aim was to achieve what Clifford Geertz has called "thick description," a narrative rendering of classroom reality, its ambiguities intact, not a model, statistical average, or other purified representation of "what happened." The teacher-researchers shared a pervasive self-consciousness about interpretation, a desire to offer richness of detail in place of clearcut generalities, a concern for discussing "readings" of the classroom with the largest possible number of people (the teacher and students involved as well as the other researchers and the coordinators of the project), a determination to write narratives about teachers' practices rather than conventional research reports, an emphasis on "storyteller," "theme," "plot," and "character," more typical of literary study than of empirical research. In this instance, researchers and teachers collaborated to create stories of classroom life: their viewpoints converge and diverge in intricate ways which the resulting narratives do not attempt to conceal. The researchers are narrators who do not seek to render themselves invisible in what they write, whose voices are distinctive and important to the meaningfulness of the stories. The teachers and students are characters who come to life according to the ways in which they have been conceived by the narrators. Each story is organized-- has plot-- according to the themes that emerged for each narrator over the course of observation and talk.

What Has Been Learned

Teacher research is phenomenological in its aim, not abstractive or generalizing. Arthur Eddington once observed (The Nature of the Physical World [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1958]) that physicists can characterize an elephant sliding down a grassy hillside by means of force vectors, computations of mass, and coefficients of friction, and that the resulting representation will be both accurate and useful. But its limitation, Eddington adds, is that the elephant and the grassy

hillside will have disappeared from the merely schematic rendering (251-52). Our teacher-research studies sought, as it were, to retrieve that elephant, that grassy hillside, and the world of meanings surrounding them, as a material presence. Geertz argues that "culture" is composed of "interworked systems of construable signs," and that, as such, it is best regarded not as an entity, an objective power "to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed" but rather as a "context" in which these "can be intelligibly--that is, thickly--described" (14). Cultural analysis for Geertz is "microscopic" (21), emphasizing the thickness, the details and textures, the colorations and ambiguities, of everyday life in its "phenomenal" immediacy. Culture is a context of particularities, existing only in and through them.

Our teacher-research studies were concerned with the culture of the classroom, aiming to depict, to evoke, what phenomenologists such as Heidegger and Gadamer have called 'the life world'--that palpable, tactile, kaleidoscopic, mysterious reality that constitutes our material rather than merely intellectual existence. The studies seek to retrieve the intuitive understandings, the oblique awarenesses, the ambiguities and paradoxes, of life as it is lived, not because that is the only way to see life but because it is a way that other forms of inquiry tend to neglect, sometimes at peril to our recollection of life's richness and complexity.

The Center's teacher-research studies view the cultural reality of the classroom from a vantagepoint within it instead of outside it. Geertz's anthropologist is an outsider, possessed of the advantages of that status--the ability to see what is "ordinary" (to insiders) as something strange and different, the ability to comment on a way of life detached from its habitual claims to insiders' attention and therefore free from its enveloping rationale as a necessary way of being in the world. The outsider has the distance to recognize otherness, and therefore what is distinctive about a given social reality, while also escaping the illusion, woven by that reality, that it is timeless, inevitable, unchangeable, and right. The teacher-researcher's initial challenge as an insider was to defamiliarize the classroom world, to make what was usually thought to be normal, natural, and ordinary into an object of altered attention, where its rationales, practices, and institutions became

available to critical scrutiny and no longer simply compelled belief. Having met this challenge (which is itself a valuable step in making teachers aware of the possibilities of educational change), the special knowledge of the insider enhances understanding of the classroom world. Motives, assumptions, intuitive awarenesses, the "felt-sense" that insiders have about the character of their reality, which is unavailable except as hearsay to the outsider, are now accessible, lending first-hand richness to its portrayal. When alert, critical teachers "read" the practices of other teachers, they represent them from the sympathetic vantage point of those who understand what it feels like to be in the classroom, those who know the potentials and peculiarities of children at a certain age, those who know the political realities that inform educational practice and govern its shape. In the reports they prepared for the Center, the teacher-researchers compared what they saw in other teachers' classes to what they do in their own, what they hear other teachers saying to what they know themselves--providing a basis for critical judgment that the outsider lacks.

Teacher research depends on narrative--the story, the representative anecdote--as its means of articulating what it has come to understand. The story is concrete, immersed in the life-world, where the traditional research report is aloof and generalized. The first aims to evoke, the second to simplify. The first brings the reader actively into the process of construing meaning; the second directively announces its conclusions. There are gains in each: neither is intrinsically more "reliable" than the other. Each invites the reader to assume a particular stance, to effect a particular quality of attention. Narratives convey themes rather than lines of reasoning or argumentative conclusions; and the themes reside within the details of the story (just as, for Geertz, culture resides in the details of social life). The themes are not announced as such by the narrator-- the teacher narratives produced by the Center teacher-researchers do not "summarize" their "findings"; instead, the themes are construed by readers (including the writer) as details of the story unfold and suggest their meaningfulness in an evolving context. The reading of literature offers a helpful comparison: critics may judge that the awakening of guilt and the effects of that awakening constitute a theme of Crime and Punishment, but they reach that conclusion, as active readers, by reflecting upon the details of

the story, not by seeing it explicitly affirmed by Dostoevsky at some point in the narrative. Meanwhile, there is no serious argument that Dostoevsky's portrait of Raskolnikov is somehow less "reliable" than a psychologist's report on the "guilt mechanism."

What has been learned from the teacher-researcher narratives? Stories dramatize the life-world, rather than abstracting from it. So, the learning that the stories offer is inductive and intuitive, an improved quality of understanding that comes from the attentive reading of details and the construing of themes. The narratives offer glimpses of actual life in the classroom, impressions of what it is like, without removing the complexities, uncertainties, contradictions, and paradoxes, of life as it is lived. The stories do not, of course, lead to general conclusions; they do not offer quantitative advances in the store of knowledge or a systematic development of some analytic argument to which a slow succession of other studies has already contributed. They may remind one of other stories, inviting comparison, but they do not point to necessary conclusions when they bring to mind similar themes any more than they falsify each other when they are different. The stories improve the quality of knowledge without increasing the content of information. They remind readers that people and situations and actions are not simple. They cause readers to pay attention to the phenomenal character of life. They provoke reconsiderations of settled beliefs, attitudes, and judgments. They create contexts for reflection. They offer images of the possible and even retrieve what has appeared to be impossible. They make room for the knowledge that resides in ambiguity. At their best, they articulate feelings, hunches, dispositions, awarenesses, doubts, desires, that lie too deep in readers to be effectively touched by other forms of symbolization. They give voice to hopes and imaginings.

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Chapter 8

Institutional Activities

Genevieve Bronk

In addition to its extensive research agenda, through its three years of operation the Literature Center also carried out its ongoing mission of outreach. The Center established a publication series, collaborated with other organizations interested in improving the learning and teaching of literature, sponsored a series of seminars and conferences targeted at specific audiences, and shared Center research at major conferences sponsored by related professional associations. Through these activities, the Center sought to stimulate a dialogue about issues in the learning and teaching of literature among teachers and scholars across the country.

Publications

The Center published 45 reports during its three years, including 28 technical reports from Center-sponsored research projects, 15 occasional papers on literature-related issues, and two extensive annotated bibliographies (one on research and one on instruction). In addition, Center staff wrote articles about their work that have appeared in a wide range of research and pedagogical journals, and edited four books of related papers on issues in research and teaching. A complete list of Center-sponsored and related publications is included in appendix 3.

The Center reports received wide public attention. Copies of the reports were sent as soon as they were issued to key researchers and policymakers, and were available at cost to the general public. Some 5000 copies were distributed in all. The report on book-length works taught in American schools was picked up by the Associated Press as one of the top ten stories released in the United States on that particular day, and was featured throughout the country. The report on the state of assessment in literature was also picked up by the Associated Press and distributed throughout the country. The Center's work was also the subject of a special Voice of America

interview, prerecorded for broadcast throughout the world.

Collaborations

In order to increase the impact of its work, the Literature Center collaborated with other Centers, projects, and professional organizations with an interest in the teaching of literature. Four of the most closely related groups were invited to participate on the Center's National Advisory Board (National Council of Teachers of English, Modern Language Assocation, American Association of School Librarians, and California Literature Project). These collaborations helped disseminate Center findings through these organizations' existing networks, and provided us access to their professional journals and conferences.

The Center also used a variety of mechanisms to encourage individual scholars and teachers around the country to become involved in the intellectual life of the Center. In addition to distributing publications and sponsoring conference sessions, the Center also commissioned teachers and scholars to prepare papers on important issues in literature instruction, and involved others in Center activities as reviewers of work-in-progress. These efforts helped to create a larger network of colleagues who felt some ownership for the Center's work.

Specific collaborative activities included:

In April 1988, the Center directors held a one-day meeting with James Squire, a representative of the Association of American Publishers, to provide the Association with background information on the Center (which he shared with the membership).

In May 1988, Arthur Applebee spent two days at the Center for the Study of Writing at Carnegie-Mellon, discussing current work and areas of overlap between the two centers.

In May 1988, the Center opened discussions with ERIC/RCS at Indiana for copublication of materials related to the teaching of literature. ERIC has since copublished a series of "ERIC Briefs" written by Center faculty.

In November 1988, the Center organized a session at the NCTE annual convention to foster collaboration among OERI Centers with related interests in literacy. The session involved the Center for the Study of Reading, the Writing Center, and the Center for the Learning & Teaching of Literature in a symposium addressing issues of "Students at Risk."

In December 1988, a similar session was organized at the the National Reading Conference involving the Literature Center, the Writing Center, and the Elementary Subjects Center, on the

general topic of Writing & Literature.

In April 1989, Arthur Applebee represented the Center at a meeting with the Rockefellar Foundation on future directions in Arts Education research.

In 1989, through the encouragement of the Literature Center, Susan Hynds and James Marshall were instrumental in forming an AERA Special Interest Group in Literature. This SIG has consistently featured Literature Center research in its sessions and activities.

In November 1989, plans were formulated to become involved in a teacher training network in cooperation with the New York State Department of Edication, to institute reform in the teaching of literature in New York State.

During the 1989-90 academic year, Judith Langer was a member of The Reading Development Advisory Board organized by the National Council of Chief State School Officers. This committee was charged with the development of the theoretical framework for the objectives and overseeing the item specifications for the 1992 National Assessment of Reading as well as the new state by state assessment in reading. The underlying theory for both assessments is based upon the work developed under the Center grant and reported in Report Series 2.1, The Nature of Literary Understanding.

During the 1990-91 academic year, Arthur Applebee and Judith Langer were each invited by the National Assessment of Educational Progress to serve on the developmental committees for the 1992 assessments. This work, focussing on item selection and review of field test results, is still in progress.

Seminars and Conferences

The Center sponsored three types of seminars and conferences: 1) Public seminars focusing on research by Center faculty and by outside scholars who came to the Center for presentations, 2) Staff seminars which focused on work-in-progress, where all Center faculty, graduate research assistants and staff met regularly; and 3) Center-sponsored conferences that included a larger community of colleagues. Separate, targeted conferences were conducted for teachers, for English and language arts editors from major educational publishers, and for directors of large-scale assessment programs. A list of public seminars and conferences follows:

Conference on Civic Literacy, St. Louis. This conference was cosponsored by the St. Louis Public Schools and the Center for the Learning and Teaching of Literature. Teachers and curriculum supervisors from the midwest attended this conference. The papers presented at this conference were published as a conference proceedings.

"Rethinking the Teaching of Literature: Students, Teachers & Texts," Albany. The Center's first major literature conference attracted teachers, university professors, and graduate students in Education and English. Each of the presenters subsequently wrote their presentation as occasional paper and became part of the Center's technical report series. The essays which were then edited by Judith Langer have been accepted for publication by NCTE.

"Teaching Literature in the Schools: Past, Present, Possibilities," Albany. This major conference was specifically targeted to a teacher audience, presenting relevant Center work and providing the teachers with a forum to discuss the implications of these ideas for their own classes. Although most participants were from New York and New England, other registrants came from as far away as Hawaii.

New Directions in Literature Instruction, Albany. This conference was cosponsored by the Association of American Publishers. The audience consisted of representatives of the major publishers of literature and reading materials for elementary and secondary schools. The two day conference allowed Center faculty to give the publishers a complete overview of the research conducted by the Center. From the evaluations which the AAP received from the participants, the conference was viewed as the best special conference they have cosponsored.
The Place of Literature in Large-Scale Assessment, New York City. This conference, held in conjunction with the National Testing Network, was targeted at state assessment directors.

James Marshall, University of Iowa, "Discussion Strategies in Literature Classes."

Michael Rutherford, Director of Alternative Literary Programs, "Ways to Extend School Literature Programs." Combined with the Rutherford presentation, Jeannine Laverty, Folklorist and Storyteller, discussed and enacted the Genre of Oral History as a Literary Tradition.

Martin Nystrand, National Center on Effective Secondary Schools, University of Wisconsin, "The Effects of Classroom Discourse on Literature Achievement."

Conference Representation

As part of its effort to stimulate debate about the teaching of literature, the Center sponsored presentations at a variety of local, state, and national meetings for teachers and for scholars. Center work was represented at the following meetings:

November 1, 1987- October 31, 1988

National Reading Conference (Sean Walmsley)

National Council of Teachers of English (Arthur Applebee & Judith Langer)

Modern Language Association (Alan Purves)

Conference on College Composition & Communication (Cy Knoblauch)

American Educational Research Association (Judith Langer, Arthur Applebee, Alan Purves, Genevieve Bronk)

New York State Education Department English Conference (Arthur Applebee)

International Reading Association (Arthur Applebee, Judith Langer)

College Entrance Examination Board's English Advisory Group (Alan Purves

New York State Department of Education meeting on testing in literature (Judith Langer)

Presentation at Guilderland Central School (Judith Langer)

Cable TV Presentation to California Department of Education (and televised throughout the state), sponsored by the California Literature Project (Arthur Applebee, Judith Langer)

Keynote Speaker for Catskill Whole Language Association (Judith Langer)

Civic Literacy Conference, St. Louis Public Schools (Arthur Applebee, Judith Langer, Alan Purves)

New York State Reading Association (Arthur Applebee, Judith Langer)

California State Department of Education, Conference on Visions of Assessment: Beyond Short "Right" Answers (Arthur Applebee, Judith Langer)

National Council of Teachers of English (Arthur Applebee, Judith Langer, Alan Purves, Lil Brannon, Doris Quick, Carol Forman-Pemberton, David Marhafer, Roseanne DeFabio, Ann Connolly, Tricia Hansbury)

Albany Reading Council - The Teaching & Learning of Literature (Judith Langer)

Greater Washington D.C. - Reading, Teaching, & Assessment Conference (Judith Langer)

Conference on Testing in Literature, Nijmegen the Netherlands (Alan Purves)

College Entrance Examination Board (Alan Purves)

City University of New York's Annual Writing Center Association - Keynote Address (Lil Brannon)

Bard College - Keynote Address (Lil Brannon)

Modern Language Association Conference on Literacy (Cy Knoblauch)

Queensbury Middle School English Classes (Genevieve Bronk)

Mid-Atlantic Region National Women's Studies Association Conference (Jennifer Jeffers)

Reading America Conference SUNY Stony Brook (Jennifer Jeffers)

November 1, 1988 - October 31, 1989

National Reading Conference (Judith Langer, Arthur Applebee, Peter Johnston, Sean Walmsley)

New York State Reading Association (Judith Langer, Arthur Applebee, Sean Walmsley)

Stockholm School Board, Section on Immigrant Education (Eija Rougle)

Teachers Meeting in Stockholm, Sweden (Eija Rougle)

American Educational Research Association (Arthur Applebee, Judith Langer, Alan Purves, James Marshall, Genevieve Bronk)

National Council of Teachers of English Research Assembly (Judith langer)

Association of American Publishers (Arthur Applebee, Peter Johnston)

Literacy & Diversity Conference (Arthur Applebee, Judith Langer)

New Jersey Department of Higher Education Seminar (Alan Purves)

State University College Buffalo - Seminar on the Teaching & Assessment of Literature (Alan Purves)

Silver-Burdett & Ginn - Guest Speaker (Arthur Applebee)

California State Department of Education - Keynote Speaker (Judith Langer)

CW Post College - Keynote Speaker (Judith Langer)

Learning Research Development Center, OERI Center Networking Conference (Judith Langer)

State of California Assessment Project (Alan Purves)

International Reading Association Annual Conference (Sean Walmsley)

College Board English Advisory Committee (Alan Purves)

Connecticut Council of Teachers of English - Keynote Speaker (Lil Brannon)

Conference on College Composition & Communication (Lil Brannon)

Indiana Teacher of Writing - Keynote Presenter (Lil Brannon)

Schenectady District Administrators Association (Judith Langer)

California State Department of Education Literacy Conference (Judith Langer)

Chief State Officiers, Reading Objectives Development Conference (Judith Langer)

Silver-Burdett & Ginn Editors' Workshop (Judith Langer)

Alternative Literacy Programs Conference (Alan Purves)

University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee - Speaker (Lil Brannon)

CUNY Association of Writing Supervisors (Lil Brannon)

Albany City School District, Citywide workshop for English teachers (Francine Stayter)

November 1, 1989 - October 31, 1990

National Council of Teachers of English (Arthur Applebee, Judith langer, Alan Purves, Lil Brannon, Cy Knoblauch, Susan Burke, Ann Connolly, John Danaher, Carol Forman-Pemberton, Tricia Hansbury-Zuendt, Doris Quick, Francine Stayter)

National Reading Conference (Arthur Applebee, Judith Langer, Peter Johnston)

NAEP Writing Objective Development Committee for 1992 (Arthur Applebee)

NAEP Reading Objective Development Committee for 1992 (Judith Langer)

Drake University - Public Address & Consultation (Lil Brannon)

Editors' Seminar, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, "Current Trends in the Teaching of Literature" (Arthur Applebee)

American Association of Publishers, School Division Conference (Writing & Learning Across the Curriculum) (Arthur Applebee)

University of Indiana, Faculty Seminar, "Studying the Teaching of Literature" (Arthur Applebee)

American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting (Arthur Applebee, Judith Langer, Alan Purves, Peter Johnston, Sean Walmsley)

International Reading Association Annual Meeting (Sean Walmsley)

New York State Department of Education Conference on English Language Arts (Judith Langer)

California Department of Education Conference on English Language Arts (Judith Langer)

New York State English Association Annual Meeting (Arthur Applebee)

Center for Writing & Literacy, Albany (Judith Langer)

Conference on College Composition & Communication (Lil Brannon)

University of Connecticut, Connecticut Writing Project (Lil Brannon)

Shaker High School - Presentation (Cy Knoblauch)

New York State Education Department Statewide Language Arts Improvement Program (Arthur Applebee, Judith Langer)

National Assessment of Educational Progress, Writing Assessment Development Committee (Arthur Applebee)

Teaching Literature in the School: Past, Present, Possibilities, Center for the Learning & Teaching of Literature, University at Albany (All Center Faculty Presented).

Norwegian Center for Writing and Literacy, Invited Professor (Judith Langer)

New York State Reading Association Annual Meeting (Arthur Applebee, Sean Walmsley)

Appendix 1

Advisory Board Members

National Advisory Board

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Richard Beach, University of Minnesota
Glenda Bissex, Vermont College of Norwich University
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Courtney Cazden, Harvard University Graduate School of Education
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Susan Lehr, Skidmore College
James Marshall, University of Iowa

Ina V.S. Mullis, National Assessment of Educational Progress
Miles Myers, National Council of Teachers of English
George Newell, Ohio State University
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James Squire, Silver Burdett & Ginn
Dorothy Strickland, Rutgers University
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Janet Waanders, Educational Testing Service
Ann Carlson Weeks, American Association of School Librarians

Appendix 2

Center Staff, 1987-1990

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Arthur Applebee, Director
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Alan Purves, Co-Director
Genevieve Bronk, Assistant Director

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Appendix 3

Publications

Center Publications

Report Series:

1.1 The Teaching of Literature in Programs with Reputations for Excellence in English. 1989. Arthur N. Applebee

1.2 A Study of Book-Length Works Taught in High School English Courses. 1989. Arthur N. Applebee

1.3 Teaching Literature in Elementary School. 1989. Sean A. Walmsley and Trudy P. Walp

1.4 Literature Instruction in American Schools. 1990. Arthur N. Applebee

1.5 A Study of High School Literature Anthologies. 1991. Arthur N. Applebee

1.6 A Study of 2nd Graders' Home and School Literary Experiences. 1991. Sean Walmsley

2.1 The Process of Understanding Literature. 1989. Judith A. Langer

2.2 Teaching Literature in High School: A Teacher Research Project. 1989. Lil Brannon and C.H. Knoblauch

2.3 Taking the Fear Away from Learning. 1989. Ann Connolly

2.4 A Journey of Great Expectations: Charles Dickens Meets the Ninth Grade; A Teacher-Researcher Discovers Life in AnotherClassroom. 1989. Tricia Hansbury

2.5 Being There with Kevin Tucker. 1989. Carol Forman-Pemberton

2.6 The Heart and Soul of the Class. 1989. David Marhafer

2.7 Classroom as Text: Reading, Interpreting, and Critiquing a Literature Class. 1989. Roseanne DeFabio

2.8 The Teacher as Mentor-Guide: Joe Allen on Antigone. 1989. Doris Quick

2.9 Patterns of Discourse in Classroom Discussions of Literature. 1989. James Marshall

2.10 Discussions of Literature in Lower-Track Classrooms. 1990. James Marshall, Mary Beth Klages, and Richard Fehlman

2.11 Literacy Understanding and Literature Instruction. 1991. Judith Langer

2.12 Will Blake: Teaching and Learning Huckleberry Finn. 1990. Susan Burke

2.13 The Mythmaker of Seneca. 1990. Doris Quick

2.14 Voices Making Meaning: Reading the Texts with Tony Carrera. 1991. Tricia Hansbury-Zuendt

2.15 Supporting the Process of Literature Understanding: An Analysis of a Classroom Discussion. 1991. Doralyn Roberts and Judith Langer

2.16 Pullin' it all Together--Karen Dunne: One Woman Workin' too Hard. 1991. John Danaher

2.17 Discussions of Literature in Middle-Track Classrooms. 1991. James Marshall, Mary Beth Klages, and Richard Fehlman

3.1 The Current State of Assessment in Literature. 1989. Pamela Brody, Carol DeMilo, and Alan C. Purves

3.2 Comparison of Measures of the Domain of Learning in Literature. 1990. Alan Purves, Hongru Li, and Margaret Shirk

3.3 Prototype Measures of the Domain of Learning in Literature. 1991. Alan Purves, Hongru Li, and Margaret Shirk

3.4 Teachers' Evaluations of Teaching and Learning in Literacy and Literature. 1990. Peter Johnston, Paula Weiss, and Peter Afflerbach

3.5 Student Perceptions of Achievement in School Literature. 1991. Alan Purves, Virginia McCann, and Paul Renken

Resource Series:

R.1 Research on the Learning and Teaching of Literature: Selected Bibliography. 1989. Richard Beach and Susan Hynds

R.2 Selected Bibliography of Materials and Approaches in the Learning and Teaching of Literature. 1989. James Bradley

Occasional Papers:

4.1 Indeterminate Texts, Responsive Readers, and the Idea of Difficulty in Literature Learning. Alan 1990. Purves

4.2 The Difficulty of Difficulty. 1990. Hazard Adams

4.3 Sources of Difficulty in the Processing of Written Language. 1990. Wallace Chafe

4.4 The Difficulty of Reading. 1990. Helen Elam

4.5 Reading and Understanding Literature. 1990. Gunnar Hansson

4.6 Questions of Difficulty in Literary Reading. 1990. Susan Hynds

4.7 Literary Theory and the Notion of Difficulty. 1990. William Touponce

4.8 Making It Hard: Curriculum and Instruction as Factors in Difficulty of Literature. 1990. Martin Nystrand

5.1 Teaching Literature: From Clerk to Explorer. 1990. Jayne DeLawter

5.2 Literary Reading and Classroom Constraints: Aligning Practice with Theory. 1990. Patrick Dias

5.3 Challenging Questions in the Literature Classroom. 1990. Susan Hynds

5.4 To Teach (Literature)? 1991. Anthony Petrosky

5.5 Five Kinds of Literary Knowing. 1990. Robert Probst

6.1 How did We get Here: Seventh-Graders Sharing Literature. 1990. Elizabeth Close

6.2 On The Outside Looking In: A Study of Remedial Readers' Meaning-Making While Reading Literature. Victoria Purcell-Gates

Eric Digests:

Book-Length Works Taught in High School English Courses. A. N. Applebee, May 1990.

Testing literature: The current state of affairs. A. Purves, June 1990.

Center Overview Brochure

Literature Center Briefs: "Book-Length Works Taught in High School English Courses"

Literature Center *Update*: Annual Newsletter

Related Books and Articles by Affiliated Faculty and Staff

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Curriculum research in writing and reading. In P. Jackson, Ed., Handbook of research on curriculum. NY: Macmillan. J. Langer and R. Allington.

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